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How They Carried The Mail

BULLETS AND ARROWS WHIZZED ALL ABOUT HIM, BUT HE SLOWLY DREW AWAY FROM HIS PURSUERS.

How They Carried The Mail

From the Post Runners of King Sargon
to the Air Mail of To-day

By JOSEPH WALKER

Illustrated by
FRANK DOBIAS

"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

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HOW THEY CARRIED THE MAIL

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FOREWORD

You, who are young and have the ambition to do things in this life, come with me and let us see what the young lads of other days have done, and what some of the young men of our day are doing now. Let us see what it is that fills them with the joy of a task well done, what it is that spurred them on in those old days and what spurs them on now to do the jobs given them, what it is that impels them to do their work with a high spirit of adventure and a gallant loyalty to their tasks.

Old Herodotus, the father of all historians whom you will delight to read some day, wrote in his history twenty-four hundred years ago a sentence about the messengers which the great King of Persia sent out to carry his messages and commands to the far ends of the earth. He said:

> "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

And when the new post office was built in New York City a few years ago, President Wilson caused this splendid sentence to be put up in large letters across the entire front of this building where you can see it to-day. There it is, just as true of our 20th century as it was of twenty-four centuries ago.

I have picked out at random the mail carriers of old King Sargon 3,000 years before Christ, who sped over the deserts of Asia with the King's great seal and his message, beset by wild beasts and wilder bandits; the mail carrier of Greece who, at the cost of his life, ran twenty-six miles in the shortest time ever known to tell the people of Athens of the victory on the plain of Marathon—the first Marathon runner; the lads who ran and rode over the roads of Rome to all the corners of the earth; the messengers of the great Charles

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Martel who made France and of Richard Cœur de Lion of England; the pony express riders of our own land who rode across the western plains also beset by storms and hunger and wild Indians; the "Limited Fast Mail" trains that take your letters all over this country every hour of the day and night; and finally the lads that are flying from one end of the country to the other at this moment in aeroplanes, landing your letters from New York to San Francisco in less than twenty-four hours.

They do not stop for rain or snow. No heat or gloom of night holds them up. Nothing stops them from the completion of their appointed rounds! Sometimes one falls by the way and his day is over and his work is done. But another takes his letter and speeds on until that splendid appointed task is completed.

I like to think of them (and so will you) speeding somewhere all day and all night, whether afoot, or mounted, or on trains on the land, on ships on the sea, or high in the air in aeroplanes. I like to think of the adventures, the hazards, the close calls they undergo day by day, year by year. It makes me want to do something worth while, as it will you when you read of them,—something for which we get no particular praise or credit, but from which we get an immense satisfaction in the doing.

You make a long run on the football field with a clean touchdown at the end—and the crowd yells itself hoarse in praise. The lads in this book did and are doing long runs with a kind of touchdown at the end for which they get no particular praise, but from which they get a thrill that no cheers can equal.

It puts a zest into everyday things; it makes the work and the game worth while; it is a kind of salt on the meat of life. What would the whole thing be worth if we had not some task to do with a thrill at the end of it—a task, in the doing of which, nothing has stayed us from the completion of our appointed round?

JOSEPH WALKER.

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How They Carried The Mail

Chapter I

KING SARGON'S GREAT SEAL

How the earliest of world conquerors sent his messages by swift runners, and how the Great Seal which we still preserve was feared by all men.

(Time: 3000 B.C.)

EARLY morning on the Plains of Chaldea—the time three thousand years before the birth of Christ. Three figures stood out in bold relief against the morning sun, all in swift motion. The foremost was a wild goat fleeing for its life. A few paces back of it, running easily, was a youth just entering his teens, slim, bronzed, and agile. Behind them both came a horseman, his steed in full gallop. He had sighted the other two a mile away, but so swiftly had they run that, on the uneven ground, he was hard put to it to catch up with them. Indeed, the race might have continued still longer, had not the goat swerved to the right, presenting his side to his pursuer. Quick as a flash the youth threw a lance which he carried—his only weapon except a short knife. The lance struck

behind the shoulder, and the goat, after stumbling a few yards farther, fell headlong.

Then only was the boy aware of the rider, who drew up half angry, half in wonder as the young hunter bent over his quarry.

"By Bel, the father of the gods, but thou didst run fast!" he began. "Heardst thou not my halloo?"

"Nay, the wind was against thee," replied the boy, looking him in the eye, frank and unafraid.

"Never yet saw I lad who could cover the ground so swiftly. It almost winded my mare. Who art thou, boy?"

The man spoke haughtily as one accustomed to being obeyed, but the boy showed no fear. He only answered quietly:

"Urduk, I am, and the son of Jezek the runner."

"Then, well met. I was on my way to seek out Jezek, when I saw thee. Take me to him."

The boy's face fell. "Jezek is gathered to his fathers," he replied slowly. "It is now six moons since his body was found at the foot of a cliff—whether thrown there by robbers, or by accident, we do not know. That is why I hunt in early morning to provide food for my mother and sisters."

"Jezek gone?" mused the man. "I needed him on urgent business. But stay—thou hast the makings of as great a runner as he. I will take thee into my service."

"But how about my mother—?" began the lad.

"Enough—thy mother and her family will be provided for. I am Sargon the King."

At this dread name, Urduk bent the knee. "Pardon, my lord, but I knew thee not."

" 'Tis well. Know that Sargon strikes secretly. He does not let his right hand know what his left hand does. That is why I rode out alone at early morn to seek thy father. He was one of my trusted messengers, but even my courtiers knew not he served me. He was to them only a herdsman and a runner. As for thee, lad, if I am any judge of men, thou hast it within thee to grow up in thy father's place. 'Tis his same open face; and I have seen for myself thy fleetness of foot. Wilt thou serve me loyally and without question?"

"Aye, my lord, and gladly."

"Thou art young, boy, and should know that thy path as the King's messenger will be beset with peril. Thou must keep a wise head on thy shoulders and thy tongue between thy teeth. Remember Sargon rewards the faithful, but punishes the unfaithful with death."

"I shall remember, my lord."

It was not so much his words, which were few in number, that satisfied the great leader, as the boy's attitude. For a few moments he regarded him steadily, then said abruptly: "Come with me."

"But my goat—" Urduk began, boylike, then stopped in confusion.

Sargon laughed. "Right," he agreed. "I am glad to see thou dost not forget details. And may thou

be as fleet of foot for me, as when chasing goats!"

Jumping from his horse, he lifted the carcass and, assisted by Urduk, placed it across and behind his saddle. Then they went back across the plain—the horse at a brisk canter, the boy running easily beside him.

Ten years passed by. Urduk had become a grown man. Sargon, from being merely king of one people, the Akkadians, had become a world conqueror, his greatness dimmed in history only by the remoteness of his age; not even Alexander the Great, who trod the same land twenty-five centuries later, won greater victories or brought more diverse people under his scepter than did Sargon the Great, of Chaldea, or Ancient Babylon. His was the Biblical Land of Shinar, and the empire he founded long preceded Babylon and Nineveh. It was from Ur of the Chaldees, a mighty walled city, that Abraham went forth to found a nation yet unborn; yet Abraham the Patriarch lived many centuries after the mighty Sargon and his empire.

Many tales might Urduk the runner have told of the steps by which the conqueror welded together his domain. But Urduk kept his own counsel and that of his King. He never forgot that remark made to him in the early morning when they first met: "Keep a wise head upon thy shoulders, and thy tongue between thy teeth."

Urduk's duties at first seemed simple. They were some such errand as this: "Say unto Seddar of the Sumerians that this will be a dry moon." Or, "Tell

Gersek of the Hittites that the hunt is not proceeding well. He must obtain more ostriches."

Such messages were code, as Urduk well knew; but he committed them faithfully to memory, and, unnoted by any in the King's court, he would slip away and go on foot—whether ten miles or a hundred—and untiringly, until he had gained his goal. But he would do far more than this, as his master soon discovered. He made it his business to listen to the people in the market-places and in the courts of the lesser kings and priests, and the tidings that he thus brought back were of exceeding value to Sargon.

On a day he paused to rest at high noon within the portals of the temple at Erech, another of the mighty walled cities of Chaldea. All morning had he run, and he only awaited an opportune time to greet the High Priest of Bel and deliver to him a message from the King. As he stood within the shadow of a lofty column of hewn stone, his quick ear caught the sound of whispering. He glanced around but could see no one, and soon realized that the sound was borne to him along the arch overhead from some distance away. He was in a whispering gallery. Without making the slightest sound, he listened intently.

"The plan cannot fail," said one voice, "for Sargon suspects nothing. He will be struck down in his pride."

"But how will it be managed?"

"It is known that the King's messenger is on his way here with word for the High Priest. He will be de-

tained under some pretext, and meanwhile swift runners will go, speeding day and night, until Ur is reached. They will say that they have secret word for the King, and once in the audience chamber, they will strike him down."

"But how—with the guards all about?"

The reply, if any was made, was lost to Urduk's ears; the plotters had moved a few feet farther and the whispering chain was broken.

Urduk's brain worked like lightning during the next few moments. What should he do? That assassins were at work trying to take the life of the King was evident. How could he thwart them? If he tried to deliver his message to the High Priest, he would be seized and held. If he did not deliver it, his life might be forfeit; for the King's commands might not be gainsaid. Again came the memory of Sargon's words: "Keep a wise head upon thy shoulders, and thy tongue between thy teeth."

He must act cautiously, for already it was known that he was on his way with a message, and the very fact proved that treachery was afoot. He resolved to return to Ur without having seen the High Priest.

Glancing cautiously about, he slipped quietly from one giant column to another until he was at the outer corridor. Then a group of worshipers passed out and he fell in with them, and walked slowly through the streets until he came to the city gate.

Here another turn of luck aided him. A man com-

ing from market with a load of goods on a donkey turned to speak to an acquaintance, and the donkey grew alarmed at a sudden noise and began to bolt. The owner shouted at him, which made the beast only run the faster. The quick-witted Urduk also shouted and pursued the animal. Out through the gate ran all three, while the keepers at the gate split their sides with laughing. Once outside, Urduk easily caught the runaway, and held him until his owner, a fat man, came puffing up after them.

"May the blessing of the gods be thine," said he as soon as he had caught his breath.

" 'Twas nothing, friend," said Urduk. "Methinks the gods have already rewarded me for this slight service."

After a few more words on either side, the runner went on his way, glad indeed that he had passed the guards so easily. Once out of sight, his careless walk changed into a long, easy lope which he knew how to maintain hour after hour. And as he ran, another remark of the King's on that far-off morning came back to him: "May thou be as fleet of foot for me, as when chasing goats!" Aye, he would change the King's jest into earnest.

All that afternoon he ran, pausing only from time to time when he saw some horseman or other traveler approaching, when he would hide until he had passed; for he could not risk being halted. At night he continued, thanks to a friendly moon, and at dawn he saw

the welcome towers of Ur. With sunrise the gates of the city swung open, and he entered with the first throng who sought to display their wares of fresh vegetables and fruit in the market-place.

The King himself was an early riser, and was sitting on an open veranda eating a pomegranate when Urduk, who was known of the palace guard, presented himself without notice. Sargon arched his eyebrows slightly at sight of him. He knew that the runner must have traveled all night, to return thus promptly from Erech.

"What said the High Priest?" he asked, without other greeting.

"My lord, I have no word from him," replied Urduk.

"And why no word?"

"Because I delivered not the King's message."

Sargon stared, his wrath rising every moment.

"Thou—didst not deliver it!"

"No, my lord."

"Knowest not that thy head is forfeit for this presumption?"

The King made as though to clap his hands to summon his guard, but Urduk spoke quickly.

"First hear me, my lord. The King's life is in peril," he said.

"Say on," thundered the King, his brow still dark.

Rapidly Urduk told him of the plot he had overheard, and why it was that he had not delivered his message. As he listened, Sargon's face cleared.

"Thou didst well," was his final comment. "Now we must find means to thwart this plot. When, sayest thou, will the three messengers appear?"

"Some time this morning, I should aver, my lord. They will run fast, especially when they had failed to find me in Erech."

Urduk spoke true; for it was not two hours later when the men were announced. Trained runners all were they, else they could not have trailed the speedy Urduk so closely. The King received them, and not knowing how they planned to attack, he sat with his back to a curtain behind which men stood with javelins and swords.

Yet these precautions seemed not enough to Urduk. With face and hands dyed so that he resembled an Ethiopian slave, he stood alongside the King with a great fan. As one of the three men on bended knee handed a clay tablet to the King, saying, "From my lord the High Priest," a second man quickly placed a tube to his lips and prepared to blow. Instantly Urduk's fan descended and the tube went clattering to the floor. At the commotion the men-at-arms behind the curtain sprang forward and seized the three plotters.

"This was thy message of death, my lord," said Urduk, picking up the little tube and showing it to the monarch. "I have heard of them before, but never yet have seen one. It is a blow-pipe and by means of it a little dart is shot out. The dart is tipped with deadly

poison. If it so much as pricks the skin, the one who is wounded does not recover."

"Their heads shall be sent back to the High Priest of Bel as a warning," said Sargon grimly. "And as for thee, Urduk, it is high time that thou wert taking a more worthy place in my court. Go and remove these marks of a slave and come again to me."

The young man bowed and withdrew. On his return, none would have recognized the swarthy slave of an hour before. Urduk was indeed good to look upon. His life in the open air had made him an athlete of perfect build. His shoulders were broad, his waist tapering, his thighs straight, his legs beautifully curved. He did not have an ounce of unneeded flesh on him. Clad only in a loin cloth and tunic thrown lightly over his shoulders, he looked like some statue carved in bronze which had been endued with life.

Sargon looked him over from head to foot, as though he were seeing him for the first time; and as he looked, he bethought him of the numberless times this young man had served him quietly and well, and how he had just saved his life.

"Urduk," he said, more like a father to his son than king to subject, "I would give thee high place at court, yet I can ill spare thee as my trusted messenger."

"I seek no other reward than serving my lord," said Urduk; "but if I may speak, I have a plan which may interest the King."

"Is it something for my private ear alone, or a thing that my ministers may hear?"

"It would be well to have their counsel."

The King clapped his hands and at the signal a slave appeared.

"Summon me the lords Eldar, Shennem, and Burdek," he ordered.

The slave salaamed and withdrew. Within a moment or two—for Sargon was accustomed to being obeyed promptly—the three members of the privy council appeared. They bowed profoundly to the King, but they hardly noticed the young man who stood by his side until Sargon called their attention to him.

"See ye this man?" he said, pointing to Urduk. "Ye may have seen him come and go in the past, without knowing of his services; for this was my will. But now heed him well, for it is time that he was taking his proper place in my palace."

Then as Urduk still hesitated to speak, Sargon continued: "From long training he keeps silence. But know that he has been my hands and my feet in many a secret mission, which you yourselves, my lords, have wondered at. Speak, Urduk, freely and tell the thought that is now in thy mind."

"It is this, my lords," began Urduk modestly, but as he continued to speak, his words came more easily. "As my lord, Sargon the King, has told you, he has honored me, these years, by the task of carrying mes-

sages for him. Now that he is firmly seated on a throne whose power is felt from the rising of the sun to the going down of it, I have had a thought as to how his word may be made more secure, as messengers carry it to distant lands.

"Know, then, that as I walked down the market-place a few days agone, I chanced to note the gem cutters at their work. They make raised characters, both of writing and picture, which stand out boldly. If they should take a precious stone of extra size and carve thereon the name of the great King Sargon, and his official greeting, this could be used to impress upon plates of clay while they are still damp. It could be pressed upon a tablet bearing the message from the King, and would thus carry his official authority. None would dare gainsay it or dispute the word of the messenger."

The King shrewdly forbore comment at this suggestion, until it had sunk into the heads of his three counselors. One by one they spoke.

"It is a goodly saying," they admitted.

"I have often entrusted to Urduk my ring, to carry with him on some important mission, to seal his authority. But, as ye know, there is always danger of its loss or misuse by some one else into whose hands it might chance to fall. Now this new thought is far better. I can utter my words upon the clay tablet which, when hard, cannot be altered. My seal at the bottom will make it the law."

"Thy seal, my lord," said Urduk. "That is the very word!"

"The Great Seal of Sargon the King," said Eldar enthusiastically. "I have but one sorrow at this suggestion."

"And that is—?"

"That I did not think of it myself, my lord!"

"May thy patience allow me one more word, my lord?" asked Urduk.

"Say on."

"Let us establish a royal courier service that will be known of all men. King Sargon no longer needs to work in the dark. His word is law. Unless for some special need where stealth is required, let us send out his mandates openly, marked with his Great Seal—and death to the man who neglects them—death likewise to the man who stays the messenger of the King!"

"Well said!" agreed the monarch, his eyes glittering with pride. And the more he thought of it, the more the idea appealed to him. Instead of secret mandates such as he had used during his rise to power, he would now publish to the world his word, and it would be the law.

Then spoke Shennem the scholar, a man versed alike in the world's history and the stars of the heavens.

"O King," said he, "this young man utters a more profound thing than he is aware of. I have often thought, as I delved into the records of people who

have passed on before us, and whose homes are now the haunts of jackals, that we, too, should give a thought to posterity. We should leave a fitting record of this empire for future historians, so that the name of King Sargon should be known after this city of Ur—which Bel forbid!—should crumble into dust.

"Let us, therefore, I pray, build into our walls and into our temples a written record of King Sargon's reign, and let the bricks be stamped with his Great Seal. Thus shall the people who come after us know his glories and what manner of men were his subjects. I have spoken."

"Again well said!" exclaimed the monarch. "I have wise counselors indeed. To thee, O Shennem, I entrust the task of gathering together scribes. Urduk, thou wilt search out for me the cleverest gem cutters in the city, and let them prepare designs for the Great Seal. To the one whose design is accepted, I shall present a house fully appointed, and ten slaves. Anon I will talk more at length with thee about the courier service. Meanwhile, I order you—Eldar and Burdek—to acquaint yourselves with the bounds and roads of my kingdom, to the end that we may plan wisely. Urduk will advise with you and answer your questions. His feet have followed many devious routes."

So saying, King Sargon lifted up his right hand to signify that the conference was at an end, and his four servants bowed low and backed out of the room, their faces turned toward him until the heavy curtains fell.

The next day Urduk sought audience, and with him came five swarthy men, each of different nation. One was a Phœnician, another from the Isle of Crete, a third a Sumerian, a fourth an Akkadian, and the fifth a native of India. Cunning men were they in cutting jewels and in work in intaglio and relief. When in a few words the monarch told them of his desire for a Great Seal, their eyes glistened and their finger tips quivered. Already in thought they were at work upon it and the prize was theirs.

"Seek out Shennem, my historian," admonished the King. "He will advise with you concerning the legend ye will inscribe thereon."

The five artisans salaamed profoundly and, guided by Urduk, visited Shennem, with whom they talked many times thereafter.

Now that the idea of a Seal had lodged in Sargon's mind, he was impatient to see it a reality. He sent Urduk almost daily to inquire progress, with the result that in two weeks' time the competitive designs were ready. They were traced in pattern on parchment with ink, and were so fine that the monarch and his cabinet pondered long over them. At last he chose not one but two, making one a seal for private correspondence, and the other the Great Seal of State.

The Great Seal showed in the center the signet of King Sargon with finely engraved notations. It was supported on the backs of two bullocks and represented

the power and majesty of the King. At each side captive kings knelt and offered tribute.[1]

The fortunate gem cutter who won the prize was the Phœnician. He made haste to transfer his design to a precious stone and this was mounted upon a bracelet and worn constantly by the King.

Meanwhile Shennem had done something more than gather clever scribes together. He charged upon them the duty of simplifying their alphabet. This was largely picture writing, but instead of pictures of animals, he employed symbols. The letters were cuneiform, or wedge-shaped, but for a long time, or until people understood them, both pictures and symbols were employed. The private seal of Sargon shows both kinds of writing.

Those were busy days for Urduk, for the third of the great duties—that of establishing a courier service—rested upon his shoulders. The counselors merely advised with him. In his goings to and fro, he had met other young men who were fleet of foot and staunch of courage. They were of various races, but this was likewise an advantage, as they could talk in the tongue of their people. One by one and carefully he gathered his young men together, and assigned them their routes. A map of the land was made, from the Land of Canaan and the deserts of Arabia to the deserts of

[1] After the lapse of many centuries—as the shrewd Shennem predicted—the two seals were brought to light again and are now among the treasures of the Louvre, in Paris.

Gobi on the borders of Cathay. In particular, every road or path threading the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates and down to the Persian Gulf was shown, as this was the heart of the empire.

On a day King Sargon held a great audience. In his court were vassal kings and lords and ambassadors from the farthest-flung possessions. In front of his throne stood a herald, with a trumpet richly inlaid with gold. At the third blast, a little group of young men came up the center of the hall, led by Urduk. Each man was naked, save for a loin cloth and sandals on his feet. Round his head was bound a fillet of gold cloth, the badge of the King. As they reached the throne, they knelt and awaited the King's command.

Then King Sargon arose and said in a loud voice: "Know, all my subjects, that it pleases the King to institute a royal post. It shall run on stated days carrying my words to the ends of the world, and bringing back to me any advice needful for my ears. The King's words will be sealed with the King's Seal, and it is death to any man who dares to tamper with them. I shall send by the first messenger a letter which I shall now dictate, and which I shall seal in your presence. Thus shall ye know the Seal—and knowing, obey!"

He clapped his hands, and in came another group of men—the scribes. They carried clay tablets and sharp-pointed writing tools. As they wrote but slowly, Shennem had cunningly drilled them so that each man took but a single sentence and kept it in his memory

until he had transcribed it. The first man took the first sentence, paying no attention to what followed. The second man took the second; and so on. Later, in Shennem's own room a complete draft was made for the King's Seal.

The King's first message as he gave it forth that day was vainglorious, but it was intended to awe his subjects. These were his words:[1]

> "Sargon, the all-powerful, king of the four corners of the world; king of all kings; lord of lords; the supreme monarch of monarchs; the illustrious chief; who under the auspices of Bel, the Sun-god, being armed with the scepter and girt with the girdle of power over mankind, rules over all the people of Bel; the mighty prince whose praise is blazoned forth among the kings; the exalted sovereign, whose servants Asshur has appointed to the government of the four regions, and whose name he has made famous to all posterity; the conqueror of many plains and mountains from Sumeria to the Gulf; the victorious hero, the terror of whose name has overwhelmed all regions; the bright constellation who, as he wished, has warred against foreign countries, and, under the protection of Bel—there being no equal to him—has subdued the enemies of Asshur.
>
> "As I have passed through the land I have devastated it as by a tempest. The mightiest kings I

[1] This letter is compiled from inscriptions actually found, by later kings. It is the spirit and language of many such.

"NEVER FORGET THAT YE REPRESENT THE KING. BE YE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH ITSELF!"

have defeated. The ranks of their warriors I have mowed down as with a sickle. The battlements of their cities I have leveled and made mounds of earth. Now behold I make new laws. The old laws have passed away. There shall be no word save that of Sargon the Great."

When he had ended, the trumpet blew again. All present kneeled. Then at a signal the couriers rose, and the King said, "These be my messengers, to bear my word to all men. Give ear to them, and treat them with respect. And do ye"—he addressed himself directly to Urduk's young men—"never forget that ye represent the King. Be ye faithful unto death itself!"

With a wave, he dismissed them and the audience was over. By nightfall the letter of the King was ready and sealed with his Seal. Then Urduk gave copies to each of his messengers at the gates of the city, and watched them go forth—north, south, east, and west. As he watched, little did he dream that the post which he set up that day would be known and talked about, centuries upon centuries later, when Ur and Erech had tumbled into dust, when Babylon, the mighty city and Nineveh alike, had been born and died; when Chaldea was but a memory and the wild jackal prowled over what was once the haunt of kings.

Aye, the victories of Sargon, for all his vainglory, are but dim legends of the past. But out of the ruck of time we know of his post, and his letters, and we still treasure his Great Seal.

Chapter II

KING AMENOPHIS OUTWITS THE PRIESTS OF EGYPT

The story of a Pharaoh's trusted messenger, who carried secret tidings in the face of great danger and aided his master in overthrowing the old gods.

(Time: 1380 B.C.)

"BUT whither could Kosru have gone?"

"I know not. He is not at his home, and no one has seen him enter or leave the palace."

"How knowest thou that?"

The other laughed scornfully. "I know because a priest of Ammon accosted me only this morning, and asked after his health. Oh, he was very solicitous, and asked in a soft, wheedling voice. But he cannot fool me: those rascally priests know the name of every messenger who comes in and who goes out of this palace."

The two men who conversed were dressed in the livery of the post service of Pharaoh, and sat in the lofty corridor of the King's palace at Thebes. It was the heyday of Egyptian pomp and power, the year being

1380 B.C. For two thousand years or more this mighty kingdom had flourished, and it seemed destined to flourish two thousand years more.

Two thousand years! It is hard for us in this later time to grasp what a stupendous range of time is this! Since the coming of Christ we have counted only nineteen centuries, yet in that time the Roman Empire has passed away, and out of the darkness of the Middle Ages has dawned Modern Times. Only a little over four centuries have elapsed since Columbus sailed his three tiny vessels over to the New World; so America is a small child indeed, in years, compared with this hoary giant of the past.

As the two King's messengers sat chatting idly and waiting for any summons, they looked out upon a broad and busy thoroughfare, leading down to a wharf on the Nile which was thronged with shipping. Sailing vessels of all sizes were receiving or discharging cargo, and hundreds of slaves toiled sweating in the sun, in this removal of freight. Along both sides of the busy street lofty buildings of stone stood proudly. Some were warehouses, others banks or shops, still others baths or gymnasia, while the rest were Government buildings or temples. All were so substantially built that they looked as though they would stand forever. The private homes of the wealthy class, more lightly and gracefully built, stood upon a higher street farther away from the river.

The most imposing structure—larger even than the

King's palace—was a temple built to Ammon the chief god. Its columns were of gigantic proportions, while on each side of the entrance was a huge seated statue of stone which faced the rising sun. These were the famous Memnons, and, as the first rays of the sun struck one of these majestic figures, a song seemed to rise from its carved lips. In centuries to come afterward, men spoke of it with awe and wonder, calling it the "Vocal Memnon."

The temple and statues, as well as many other buildings of imposing size, had been built by King Amenophis III. So great had been his devotion to Ammon—as also that of his ancestral line—that he took the name of Amenophis, or Amenhotep, which meant "Ammon is pleased."

The third Amenophis was a mighty warrior and keen politician. He held not only Egypt but most of Palestine and Arabia. He had further cemented his power by taking to wife a daughter of the King of Babylonia. Many letters passed between them, some of which are preserved to this day.[1]

The beautiful Queen Teye, who was as wise as she was fair, ruled her house and court with a firm hand. Even Pharaoh, whose slightest word was life or death, and whom the courtiers obeyed with fear and trem-

[1] In the year 1888 there was found at Tel el-Amarna, in Middle Egypt, a collection of over 300 letters written in cuneiform characters on clay tablets. They were from or to the King of Babylonia and other Asiatic kings, and concerned the affairs of Amenophis III and Amenophis IV. They throw a flood of light upon their reigns.

bling, gave heed to her words. And when a son was born to them, her power was greater than ever.

In the course of years Pharaoh died and was gathered to his fathers. His body was skillfully embalmed and placed with many rich gems and ornaments in a rock tomb. Then, with many imposing ceremonies, the young prince, son of Queen Teye, ascended this age-old throne, as Amenophis IV. This was the king whom the messengers served on the day our story opens, and it is with the mysterious disappearance of Kosru, one of his most trusted messengers, that we have to do. Indeed, strange as it may seem, the powerful Pharaoh himself was talking over the same matter with his mother, in a secret room of the palace.

"The time is ripe, my Mother, to show these accursed priests where we stand," said the young king with a frown.

"Hast thou counted the cost?" she returned in a quiet voice. "The priests are most powerful; it is whispered that they are more powerful than Pharaoh himself."

"That is just it; they undermine even the throne of my fathers. In the name of their many gods they flout my authority. Their spies are everywhere. Not a letter comes or goes in the palace, but in some way they have learned its contents. It is intolerable!"

The Queen laid a soothing hand upon her son's arm. Despite her mature years, she was still beautiful in face and figure, and her voice was deep and rich as music.

"I have reason to know that, too. Thou must be wary, my son. But I think the time is ripe to strike. The people complain of the tyranny of the priests, who lay upon them all sorts of grievous burdens. Their young men and maidens must serve in the many temples without pay. They are taxed heavily, while the priests wax fat. And they have declared so many animals to be sacred, that hardly enough are left for food. This worship of animals is foolish. I have taught thee better than that—to believe in the one God—but if thou wouldst lead the people into better ways, thou must walk warily—fight the priests with their own weapon, stealth."

"I know that, my Mother, and it is of that I want to talk with thee to-day."

"What wouldst thou do?"

"Knowest Amosru, the old priest of Memphis, and my teacher? He taught me many things when I went to school to him, and he thinks with us that there is but one God—a great spirit whose symbol is the Sun itself. Before Him, all other gods are but shadows—even Ammon. I had many a talk with him in the old days, and promised him that, when I came to the throne, I would overthrow the old gods, and set up the God of the Sun. He warned me, even then, of the power of the priesthood, but said that there were many priests who thought as he did, and only awaited the signal to throw off their shackles."

"Ah, my son," said the Queen, smiling fondly at

him, "it is one thing to talk as a youth to thy teacher about such things. But now that thou art on the throne, on which a fierce white light beams, thy every move is watched. How, then, canst thou communicate in secret with Amosru?"

"Trust me, Mother, for that. I agreed with him upon a secret word, and told him when he received that word, to make ready. For on a given number of days thereafter, I would strike in the open."

"But that is just the trouble, my son—the delivery of the secret word to him. Oh, it is as thou sayest—intolerable. For a thousand years the post service of Egypt has been known all over the world. In the court we receive letters daily from every corner of our own realm—on the condition of the crops, the height to which the river has risen, the amount of taxes levied, even the number of children born in a town. Our runners on foot, and our riders on swift dromedaries, are constantly on the go, even to distant points in Asia. Every week I receive letters from my home in Babylon. But long have I known that the priests, through their spies, many of whom wear our post livery, are familiar with the contents of our letters before we receive them ourselves. How then canst thou outwit them? Even though thou hast a messenger thou canst trust, he will be watched and followed, the moment he leaves the palace."

"I am providing for that, too, my Mother. Rememberest Kosru, my body-guard and armor-bearer?"

"Aye, that I do. He saved thy life once, did he not?"

"Not only once—the time thou knowest about, when he charged, single-handed, into a body of Ethiopians and rescued me—but a score of times, mayhap. He was always by my side, in those early days when I got my training in the army. Now, as thou knowest, he is my right-hand man, to do things for me that I would entrust to no one else."

"And thou wouldst make him thy messenger against the priests?"

"Aye, that I would."

"But, knowest not, he of all men will be watched?"

The young monarch laughed, showing gleaming white teeth. His face, lightly bronzed, was well shaped, and he was good to look upon.

"He may be watched, even captured; but so long as they let him go—and they will not dare detain him long—his message will go through—never fear!"

The Queen looked puzzled. "I do not remember having seen Kosru of late," she said.

"No—and no one else has. He has been confined to his room in the palace with a malady so contagious that none dare go near him. His food has been passed in to him through a hole in the door."

And the young King again laughed merrily.

"Has he recovered—is he able to go about now?" The Queen still looked puzzled, but she knew from her son's gayety that some trickery was afoot.

"He has almost entirely recovered. I think he will be able to take the air one day this week."

With this explanation Queen Teye had perforce to be content. She was too shrewd to press the matter; she knew that in his own good time Amenophis would tell her the whole story.

Had one looked in on Kosru while he was confined to a sickbed, one would have seen a remarkably hale looking young man, whose splendidly developed limbs with their rippling muscles gave no hint of weakness. His color, too, was good, and he devoured with great relish the food that was shoved his way twice a day. The only sign of any physical trouble was a bandage which was wound tightly about his head, and which he wore day and night, waking or sleeping. He chafed, however, at the inaction. For a month, now, he had been confined alone in this room, without being allowed to speak to any one. He did not know how to read, as this learning was confined largely to the priestly class. He had been a man of action and the outdoors. In desperation he invented one or two simple games of jackstraws to help pass away the time, but the days wore by slowly and heavily for him, and it was a welcome word indeed when at last a servant told him, through the hole in the door, that if he was well he should wash and dress himself, and present himself before the King's Scribe.

"But if thy head still troubles thee, thou art not to come," the servant added.

"Tell my lord Pharaoh's Scribe that my head is recovered," said Kosru. "I shall present myself in a few moments."

" 'Tis well."

When Kosru stepped out into the corridor, his face was a trifle pale, from his confinement, but his bandage was removed, and his step was as brisk as of yore.

Pharaoh, powerful as he was, worked secretly on occasion. Knowing the underhand methods of the priests, he was doing what he had confided to the Queen—meeting stealth with stealth. On the morning when he summoned Kosru, he was too shrewd to call him into secret conference. Instead, the messenger was called into the office of the Chief Scribe, where all outgoing letters were written, and incoming ones read.

It was a lofty, vaulted room not unlike some large post-office or courtroom of the present day. Along one side were long, polished tables, at which sat the scribes writing busily. At first glance one would not see anything widely different from the writing materials of to-day. The secretaries dipped blunt pens in ink-wells and wrote upon a paper-like substance. It was papyrus, for which the country was famed, and which was shipped all over the then known world. Our modern word, paper, in fact, comes from it. The papyrus plant grew along the banks of the Nile, and was used for a variety of purposes. The tougher fiber was employed in making baskets and other utensils. The basket of bulrushes in which the infant Moses was launched, as

told about in the Bible, may have been made of papyrus. The softest pith was used for food by poor people. But the chief use was for paper-making.

Strips of fiber were laid in rows, and other strips were laid across them at right angles. These were pressed firmly together, the sap of the plant binding them. When dry, a smooth, white writing surface was formed. The strips could be made of almost any size. Some were so long that they were run into rolls, and as the scroll was read, it was unrolled at one side and rolled up at the other. Such, for example, were the copies of the famous "Book of the Dead" which were placed with the mummies, or embalmed bodies of the dead, to guide them in the spirit world.

But for business or social purposes, the papyrus was cut into pages about the size of those of to-day. The letters were written in the bold characters, half picture, half symbol, which we call hieroglyphics, and which may still be seen on the stone monuments. In the earlier days of Egypt, this writing was largely pictograph, or with pictures. But as the centuries went by, it was simplified and many letters or symbols were introduced. A few years ago, after the lapse of many centuries, the secrets of the hieroglyphics were solved through the medium of the Rosetta Stone, which gave the same story in several different languages, and thus words and characters were deciphered.[1]

[1] The reader will thus see that there are now two ways of writing: one, of the ancient Chaldeans, on clay tablets, and second, of the Egyptians on papyrus.

The scene all over this large room was one of quiet busy-ness. Messengers ran hither and yon, but without confusion. Each man knew exactly what he was to do. The King maintained a large corps in this department, which was the equivalent of our modern post-office. Daily couriers were despatched to all parts of the kingdom, and weekly to other lands. Most of these men went on foot, and so swift and untiring were they, that a dromedary had hard work to keep up with them. For longer journeys frequent relays were employed. The men traveled naked, except for a girdle and a cap of peculiar shape and color which marked them as royal messengers. Attached to the girdle was a sheath in which the letter was held. While, according to the law, it was death to tamper with or delay them, the priests had their own ways of keeping tabs on all their movements.

In an inner chamber connected with the main room the Chief Scribe had his office. A private door led to the King's own apartments, but few except his personal servants and the Chief Scribe ever saw him. The person of the Pharaoh was so sacred that the common people looked upon him as a god. Only on rare occasions, when he gave a state audience or dedicated a temple, were they permitted to see him.

Although Kosru was of that select inner circle who had access to him, he was not called by the monarch on this morning. He presented himself to the Chief Scribe, who gave him only an indifferent glance, saying:

"Thou art to proceed to Memphis with this letter for Amosru, the priest."

Kosru bent his knee and took the letter, without speaking. It was forbidden for the messengers to speak in the Chief Scribe's room. Any further instructions they might need were obtained from the Master of the Couriers. But Kosru did not need to seek him out; he came and went as a "Special." Being a Special, also, he could not be relieved by relays, but must carry the message through, himself.

The distance from Thebes to Memphis, as the ibis flew, was about three hundred miles (using our modern measures). By the winding river, it was about a hundred miles further. At Coptus, where the Nile made a wide detour to the west, hardy runners might save distance by cutting straight across the desert, either coming back to the river at Tel el-Amarna, or continuing on toward Memphis. The regular trade and mail routes followed the stream.

Kosru evidently had his own instructions, for at Coptus he rested for the night at the regular relay station, and at dawn struck out boldly across one corner of the desert for Tel el-Amarna. He ran until the sun grew hot at midday, then made camp under the shelter of a friendly rock. He ate dried corn and figs, washing them down with water from a canteen which he had carried slung around his shoulders. Then he lay down and slept until the sun began to sink. Dark comes quickly in the tropical lands, but Kosru knew the land-

marks and stars. Soon the moon came up, and he traveled steadily all night long, reaching Tel el-Amarna soon after sunrise the next morning.

This place, now a straggling village, was then an important city. Indeed, all along the winding banks of the great river, which made the land fertile with its annual overflow, the higher ground was dotted with towns and cities. Back of them lay prosperous farms. Ten million people lived here, who worshiped the name of Pharaoh and were tremendously proud of their country which had flourished for so long that many of them believed it had had no beginning and would have no end. In time of drought in other lands, Egypt had food.[1] Her traders went all over the world with fine goods and jewels. Her massive public buildings, temples, and tombs were the wonder of the world.

As the weary Kosru entered the wide main road leading into the city, he found folks already astir, although the hour was early. The reason was soon apparent. Apis, the Sacred Bull, the most venerated of all the animals worshiped in Egypt, was making his annual tour of the land, and had been brought up the river from Memphis on a gayly decorated barge, to the sound of flutes and cymbals. As the barge touched at the wharf, all the people prostrated themselves until he should be led off the carpeted gang-plank and up into the city.

[1] Read again the story of Joseph and his brethren in Egypt, as found in the Book of Genesis, beginning Chapter XLII.

He was indeed a magnificent brute, and seemed to sense his dignity. Much larger than the ordinary animal, his well-groomed coat gleamed like satin. His hoofs were shod with gold. His horns were tipped with the same metal. He wore a blanket of priceless embroidery. A garland of flowers hung about his neck. He trod a path leading up into the city which was strewn with palm branches. In front of him went a troupe of dancing girls, thinly clad in white veils, who danced and sang and struck cymbals. Another girl strode by his side, striking a lyre. At each side of his head stalked two priests, portly and pompous. Behind the Bull, Apis, was a sort of palanquin borne on the shoulders of six lesser priests, containing in an ark the sacred vestments, candles, and other objects for the religious ceremony which was being held in the open square.

Although Kosru bowed down to the earth with the others, as Apis passed by, his lip curled in silent scorn. He had been too long with his master, the King, not to get some of his ideas. To him it seemed absurd that the priests, while proclaiming Ammon and the other gods, should compel the worship of beasts. Of one hundred beasts, birds, and reptiles then found in Egypt, over one-half of them were sacred, and to harm one was punishable by death. Even crocodiles were protected.

Kosru did not remain for all the ceremonies. At the first opportunity he slipped away—as he thought, un-

IN A FEW MOMENTS THE SLAVE RETURNED AND BADE KOSRU, BY SIGNS, TO FOLLOW HIM.

noticed. After his long, overnight journey he was tired and must seek repose, if he were to resume his route by nightfall. Entering a tavern, he called for food and drink, and sat him down at a table. While the man behind the counter busied himself with dishing the fish and lentils, he placed for him a mug containing a sort of ale upon the counter. At this moment a rough-looking chap pushed up to the counter, calling loudly for ale, and the cook filled another mug and placed it alongside the one waiting for Kosru. The other fellow drank his with a loud smacking of the lips, then went out again.

As soon as Kosru's mug and plate were placed before him, he fell to with a will. His appetite was ravenous, after his long run, and he washed down the plain but good food with copious draughts. Then, having eaten, he leaned back against the wall and relaxed. Instantly he fell asleep—something which he had had no intention of doing in a public place. He was to have sought out the relay station where couches were provided. But slumber came upon him so quickly and completely, that he slept like a log and snored like a sawmill.

He was awakened only by the rough shaking of the tavern-keeper. "Up," he said, "it is sundown and I must close my shop."

At first Kosru sat up blinking, his head in a whirl. Sundown! Why, he must have slept on that bench without stirring all day. It was disgraceful for a King's messenger. He thought that the man's face

wore a jeering look as he shook him awake. But it was not until he had called for a basin of water and laved his face, that his senses came back to him. He liked it not. Instinctively he felt for the letter pouch at his girdle, but it was intact and the letter was there. Yet, he must have been drugged; he was sure of it now.

However, after the first feeling of chagrin, he only smiled to himself and made ready to cover the last lap of his route, without more ado. The sleeping potion had left no ill effects, and soon he was jogging along steadily, his legs moving up and down with the regularity of driving rods.

At Memphis he made his way directly to the house of Amosru, who was the Chief Priest and a man of high importance. His house adjoined the temple of Ammon. The outer corridor was thronged with slaves, as was the custom with all persons of importance or wealth. Human labor was held cheaply. A huge Ethiopian stood guard at the inner door, but when he saw the King's messenger, he opened it at once and sent a slave to announce the visitor. In a few moments the slave returned and bade Kosru, by signs, to follow him.

Although Amosru had often seen Kosru, he gave no present indication of it, but merely asked, "Thou hast a letter for me from the Pharaoh—whom Ammon and all the gods preserve!"

"I have, my lord," responded Kosru, handing it over.

Amosru was a kingly-looking man who would have commanded attention anywhere. Tall, well-proportioned, his snow-white beard made him look older than he really was—about sixty-five. His eye was like that of an eagle; his sharp, arched nose like the eagle's beak. He read the letter in silence. It was as follows:

"To Amosru, High Priest and My Old Tutor—

"Greeting:

"The Moon has waxed and waned and the Sun completed his course in the Heavens since I have conversed with thee. I would consult thee with regard to some translations from the Hittite writings, which have aroused much interest, but I know thou art a busy man. I may summon thee, but it would not be before the waning of the second moon, the Moon of Harvest. Till then I pray that the gods may preserve thee in good health.

"Signed by Amenophis and sealed with his seal."

After reading the letter twice, Amosru at first looked disappointed, but then glanced keenly at the messenger, with those eagle eyes of his. They were alone, the priest having dismissed his attendants.

"Hast thou any further word from the Pharaoh?—whom the gods preserve!"

Kosru smiled. "My lord," he said, "it may be of interest to thee to know that, just before I was sent on this mission, I was so ill in the palace that it was deemed necessary to *shave my head.*"

He emphasized the last three words and looked meaningly at the priest. The latter did not have an alert brain for nothing. He gave a quick return glance, and then said:

"Thou must be weary from thy long journey. Come, I will conduct thee to my own sleeping quarters where thou mayest rest."

They went to an inner room, and then the dignified High Priest did a curious thing. Although the house was filled with servants, he himself heated water and prepared to shave the head of the King's messenger! At last the top was as bare as the tonsure of a monk, and there was revealed the following inscription:

"THERE IS BUT ONE GOD.
ALL OTHERS ARE DEAD."

This was the reason for Kosru's "illness." The message had been placed on his bald head and the hair allowed to grow, to conceal it. The priests who had searched his sleeping body at Tel el-Amarna (he had no doubt of that) had been foiled.

"Young man," said Amosru, sternly, "thou wert the young Prince's bodyguard, wert thou not? We can trust thee?"

"Every breath of my life is devoted to the Pharaoh," Kosru replied earnestly.

" 'Tis well, for know that thou carriest a message that even the Pharaoh would conceal—that would cost thee thy head itself, if it were discovered. I shall keep thee in close retirement, and meanwhile devise ways and means to protect thee. Later, when I send thee out, bear these words to the King—'The waning of the second moon, the Moon of Harvest.' "

It was a quotation from the King's own letter, and had told him that, on that day, the King's men would strike in Upper Egypt, at the same time with him in the Lower Country.

One day, not long after, an Arab slipped quietly out of the rear door of the House of Amosru, and turned his face up the river, leading to the south. He was two shades darker than the Egyptians, and, clad in the flowing white robe and turban of the Bedouins, he excited no comment. Kosru—for it was he—had received so many dyes on the top of his head, that his dangerous inscription had vanished, but his turban was an added safeguard until the time his hair should grow.

My story is nearly told, for the rest is history. At the time appointed, Amenophis struck. He issued a proclamation saying that the old gods were dead. There was but one God, and the Sun was His emblem.

The priests were thunderstruck, and all the more so when they found that the King had laid his plans so quietly, they were checkmated at every turn. In

Lower Egypt, thanks to the High Priest, all was in readiness. Amosru had been drilling a younger school in the new theology, which did away with the worship of many gods and animals, and turned to the one God. True, their worship was not pure. They came to bow down to the Sun itself, instead of the Creator behind it; but it was a long step in the right direction.

"At the waning of the second moon," a blast of trumpets called the people before the gates of the temple, in Memphis. There Amosru himself spoke to them —majestic in his long white robes. He told them of the one God, and how it was the will of the Pharaoh that He alone should be served.

In other temples all over the land similar scenes were enacted, but in most the priests obeyed only because they must. They taunted Pharaoh, in private, because his name meant "Ammon is pleased." When this came to the King's ears, he replied by issuing another decree changing his name to Akhenaten, which meant, "The Splendor of the Sun."

For fifteen years the struggle between King and Priesthood raged. So bitter was it in Thebes, that he removed his capital to Tel el-Amarna, where he built a gorgeous palace and still more splendid temple. During the remainder of his reign the worship of the one God was the official religion, but the habits of centuries were too strong, and many still held to their old gods in private. After he had in turn passed on to his fathers, came a new Pharaoh who was weak and indifferent, and

in the course of time the old gods and their greedy priests again triumphed.

It is all written down on ancient monuments and in letters, which, after the lapse of over three thousand years, again reveal to us these tales of old. But they do not tell of Kosru. What of him?

His Arab disguise served him well until such time as his tawny shock of hair enabled him to mingle freely with all men. Then, on a day, he presented himself at court and found opportunity to reach the King's ear. In the stirring days that followed, he was often sent on errands of high importance and remained faithful to the end—although the King did not reward him with outward rank or title. He was well content to be simply Pharaoh's trusted friend. But never again did he carry a message on the *top* of his head. He preferred to carry it *inside*.

Chapter III

THE RUNNER WHO TOLD OF VICTORY

How the tidings of the famous defeat of the Persians by the Greeks at Marathon were brought to Athens by the fleetest runner of his day, even though it cost him his life to do it.

(Time: 490 B.C.)

"THERE he goes!" The cry was taken up by a group of school children in Athens of old, and like children of to-day they scampered madly down the street, to crowd and jostle about a smiling young man who wore a laurel wreath on his brow—and practically nothing else.

He was Phidippides,[1] the most famous athlete of his day, and the adulation accorded him by the boys and girls was equally given by their elders. For all Greece worshiped physical perfection and beauty, especially in a boy just emerging from his teens into manhood. "Handsome as a Greek god," has become proverbial; for Phidias and the other great sculptors of the day delighted in carving statues of these splendid athletes and giving them the names of gods.

[1] Pronounced Fĭ-dip'i-deez.

Imagine, then, all the praise and popularity given by us to a Lindbergh and a Ruth rolled into one, and you have some idea of the excitement occasioned in Athens when the famous Phidippides walked down the street. He was a figure to seize and hold the eye. His chest curved roundly and proudly, betraying the depth of lung power. His legs were not heavy or knotted, but straight and delicately rounded. All his body had been so thoroughly massaged with olive oil that it glowed with the soft tint of bronze. Indeed, he looked like some beautiful statue come to life, with his high shoulders, slender neck, and head crowned with dark curls. His features were of that severe regularity that we still call "Grecian."

But it was not mere physical beauty and perfection which made all Athens worship him almost as a god. He had excelled in the games from the time, at twelve years old, he entered the gymnasia, until he took part in the Olympic Games. He had been victor in the palæstra, or school for wrestlers, and he had been equally good on the field and track. As an ephebus, as boys in their teens were called, he had won in local events and at eighteen, when he attained the dignity of citizen, he took part in the Olympic Games. These were far more than sporting events; they were festivals and religious services of national import. The Greeks devoted their lives to perfecting their bodies as well as their minds, because they were a small nation hemmed about by enemies. For years past, the pow-

erful Persian nation in the East had threatened their very existence. The Persians could muster hundreds on the field, where the Greeks could bring but tens; so every man of their hoplites, or foot soldiers, was an athlete.

In the Games, the pick of the youth from Athens, Sparta, Corinth, and other cities and towns took part, and it was enough glory to last a man a lifetime if he won the laurel wreath in a single one of the five great events—running, javelin throwing, hurling the discus, leaping, and wrestling. The five were called the pentathlon, and once in many, many years some superathlete arose who excelled in all five. Such a man was Phidippides, and when the news came back to Athens that he had won all five events in a single day, the town was in an uproar of delight. Business was suspended, a huge procession was formed to meet him at the gates, and the archons voted him a plot of ground and a house, and his choice of the fairest maidens of Athens for his bride.

At twenty-one Phidippides was placed on the city records as "chief runner," or bearer of official messages. The mail in those days was carried on foot, as the Greek peninsula was rugged and uneven, and a fast runner could follow the narrow defiles and rough ground and make better time than a horseman. So when Athens wished to communicate with Corinth or Sparta, or vice versa, runners were sent. There was a training school for these swift of foot, and at Athens a part of Phidip-

pides' duties was to coach such youngsters for the work. He himself carried messages only of great importance.

It would not take long to describe the costumes of these messengers, for, as already hinted, they ran unclad except for a light girdle or loin cloth. Where a written message was carried, a ribbon was fastened around the brow and the letter was placed under this, leaving the limbs and every muscle of the body free.

As Phidippides carried only important messages, he realized that matters of great moment were forward when, at daybreak one morning, he was summoned into the presence of Callimachus, the general. But he guessed beforehand the reason for the summons. Rumors had been rife for some time of a mighty expedition that Darius, the Persian King, was launching against Greece. This powerful potentate was practically master of the world, but had been thwarted in previous efforts to crush Greece. So irritated was he at the little nation's defiance, that he had ordered a servant to say to him thrice a day, as he sat down to meal, "Master, remember the Athenians!" Now, if rumor had it correctly, he *was* remembering them with vengeance, and an army was on its way so powerful that it seemed impossible for Greece to withstand it.

Callimachus, who was in consultation with Miltiades and other generals, wasted no words when Phidippides entered and saluted respectfully.

"Hark ye, Phidippides," he began crisply, "the Persian hosts are upon us. Run with all speed to Sparta

and summon aid. The time is brief; we will not write them a letter, as might be necessary with other runners. Say unto them as I shall tell you, and they know you well and will accredit your message."

The words of the message were then spoken slowly to the attentive runner, and he repeated them after the general.

"How soon do you start?" rapped out the officer.

"At once," answered Phidippides.

"When can you reach Sparta?"

"By to-morrow eve, Zeus willing."

Callimachus arched his brows, and the others leaned forward with tense interest.

"It is, as you know, 1200 stades[1] distant, and our best runners have required from three to four days. How then, say you, two days?"

"It is in the hands of the gods," replied the runner, smiling.

As he stood there, handsome, confident, very like a Greek god indeed, there was not a man present who did not feel a thrill of pride, with mayhap a tinge of envy, for this splendid youth.

"Go, then," said Callimachus abruptly, "and may Zeus guard and speed you!"

Within a few moments after leaving the officers' council, the young runner might have been seen going

[1] About 140 miles. All the details of this famous run, as well as the name of Phidippides himself, are recorded by Herodotus, the Greek historian.

through the gates of the city, his face turned toward Sparta. He did not indulge in any burst of speed as he set forth; but his legs worked smoothly, rhythmically, and with the tireless precision of a steam piston. His head was thrown well back, and he ran as if he enjoyed it, as indeed he did. And to the joy of running was added the thought, "I am running for the safety of Athens!"

Hour after hour he continued the steady, even stride, pausing only occasionally for water at some wayside stream, but even then drinking only sparingly. At midday he paused briefly at a farmer's modest home, and asked for cakes and wine. When they saw that it was the famous Phidippides who sought food, they would have turned the house inside out for him, if need were. The daughter, a comely lass, served him with many pretty blushes; while two smaller brothers gaped at him as if he had fallen from heaven. For many a long day thereafter it was their proudest boast to say: "Phidippides stopped at our house!"

But after only half an hour's rest he was again on his way; and all that afternoon he raced on. So long as there was light he ran, but when darkness fell, he sought shelter again and slept. He must conserve his strength, and besides it was dangerous to run in the dark. A single misstep and he might break a bone or sprain a tendon.

With the dawn of the second day he again took up the pace, and all that day he held it. Mile after mile

was reeled off, and still his legs beat the air like eagles' wings. His route which yesterday had led to the west and across the Peloponnesian Isthmus, now ran south to Laconia, the Spartan state. On he dashed, and just as the sun was sinking on this second day, he entered the gates of the city, ere they were closed for the day. He had covered the distance of one hundred and forty miles in two days, or seventy miles for each day!

Nor was he yet winded. "Lead me to the Assembly!" he called out to a guard. The man turned and without a word fell in with him and went at jog-trot to the public hall, where the rulers were just on the point of closing for the day. Without preamble or ceremony the tired runner dashed into their presence and lifted up his hand.

"It is Phidippides!" one man said to another, and they sat down to hear what he might say.

Two or three deep lungfuls of air did the great runner inhale—then he burst forth with the words which had been given him only the day before in far-away Athens.

"Men of Lacedæmon," he said, "the Athenians beseech you to hasten to their aid, and not allow that state, which is the most ancient in all Greece, to be enslaved by the barbarians. Eretria, look you, is already carried away captive, and Greece weakened by the loss of no mean city."

Then and not till then did Phidippides take the seat that had been offered him, and give his weary limbs

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ease. At once a buzz of debate ran round the hall, with an occasional question to the runner as to the state of affairs in Athens. The Spartans were perturbed. They were quite willing to come to the aid of their ally, but a religious observance forbade them to set forth until the full of the moon, five days later. Thus they told Phidippides, and nothing that he might say as to the need of haste moved them from their decision. It was religion, or rather superstition, against patriotism —and superstition won.

The next morning with the dawn Phidippides set forth on his long, weary return journey, grief and despair in his heart. What could be done to save his beloved city, if her allies deserted her in the time of her direst need? As he ran his lonely way over plains, up hills, through streams, and amid the forests, his mind, no less active than his limbs, prayed to the gods for help. They answered him in a strange way, as the great historian of the time, Herodotus, told 2000 years ago.

As he went up a narrow, winding way which led over a mountain, he saw, sitting in the cleft of a rock, Pan, the goat-god—half goat, half man—a friendly smile resting on his usually mocking lips.

"Stop, Phidippides!" he cried out; and as the youth halted, he continued: "Why is it that the Athenians do not build a temple in my honor? I have always been their friend, and I shall continue to be their friend. I shall be on their side, when they meet the hosts of

Persia. Go back and tell them so—that Pan fights with them!"

If Phidippides had run swiftly before, his feet fairly flew over the ground as he bore this new message back. The Spartans might be slow in coming, but Pan fought with them. To the highly religious people this news would be welcome indeed. On the second day after he left Sparta, or four days after leaving Athens, the word, "Phidippides has returned!" set all the city agog —not only on account of his phenomenal run, but by reason of the tidings he brought.

The message that Pan, the goat-god, would help them did much to mitigate their disappointment over Sparta's delay. And—to anticipate our story here—the Athenians did, in later days, erect a temple to Pan, in a grotto in the hills such as he would love. They likewise instituted games in his honor, the chief one being a torch race, in which the runners on a smooth track after dark carried in relay a lighted torch—a beautiful symbol of the torch of learning which is passed from hand to hand. Or, might we not think of it as the *post*—the carrying of the mails from one hand to another, in all the ages?

But at the time when Phidippides reached his native city again, things were indeed at a crisis. News had been brought by another runner from the north that the Persians had already landed in Attica. They were near Marathon, a plain about twenty-six miles from Athens. It was a day in September, in the year 490

B.C., by our modern calendar, and the heat of the summer was not yet past, and action on the part of the Athenian army was imperative. They could not wait the five days for Spartan reënforcements. In the officers' council, there was much division of opinion, but the voice of Miltiades carried the day. He was for striking at once—marching boldly up against the Persians, even though greatly outnumbered, and actually starting the attack. He reasoned that such an attitude would bewilder the enemy and might even rout him.

Fortunately for Greece, Miltiades' counsel won, and the army of hoplites, or men on foot, soon took the hot, dusty road leading north to the plain of Marathon. They offered a goodly sight. Each man was lightly clad, as was the Greek fashion. They never believed in encumbering the muscles of the body. Each soldier had a light cuirass, or coat of mail, which covered only his torso, leaving his arms bare. He wore a metal helmet to protect his head, and this was decorated with a long, curving plume of horse-hair. His legs were bare except for metal shin-guards, or greaves, protecting the lower part. His chief protection was his shield, a large oval or circular plate, heavily reënforced, and borne on the left arm. The right hand wielded a long and powerful spear.

And meanwhile, what of Phidippides? When he had reached Athens again at the end of his epoch-making run to Sparta, he was asked what reward he desired.

"I ask no reward except to continue to serve Athens,"

he replied. "If the army is ready for the march, I march with it."

"But," remonstrated Callimachus kindly, "you are weary from much running. We can take other messengers with us to the front."

A look of real disappointment showed in the youth's face. "If I cannot run, let me fight," he said. "Put on me the hoplite's armor, and let me be in the forefront. Athens needs every man this day."

"Well said!" replied Miltiades, in his turn. "Come with me as my personal aide. I shall need your fleet limbs to carry messages on the field of battle."

As they pursued their dusty march, they suddenly saw the gleam of spears and helmets some distance away. Could it be an advance guard of the enemy? On nearing them, it proved to be allies—a small, but picked, army of Bœotians coming from Platæa. In the past, the Athenians had come to their aid in time of danger; and now they were repaying the debt of honor. It was a good omen, and still further heartened the Greeks.

As the combined forces neared the field of Marathon, their worst fears were confirmed. The whole country seemed filled with the hosts of Persia. They were well clad—the Greeks thought, too heavily—and well armed; while behind them lay a fleet of mighty ships. What could Greece hope to do against such odds?

Figures are conflicting as to the relative size of the two armies which met each other that historic day. Most writers agree that there were at least 100,000 Per-

sians, and that the Greeks could hardly have had more than 10,000—or a ratio of ten to one. Perhaps the very size of the larger army made it unwieldy; the men got in one another's way.

Miltiades swiftly prepared his line of battle. Callimachus was placed in command of the right wing; the Platæans were placed on the left; while Miltiades himself commanded the center. The Greeks were in the shape of a crescent, with the thinnest portion at the center, the wings being heavily reënforced. It was Miltiades' plan to let the middle section yield, and when the enemy rushed in upon it, to close with his right and left flanks upon the Persians. It was a daring idea, but the initial stage of the battle was still more daring.

The little Greek army approached at a brisk march, seemingly unmindful of the great force on the opposite side, until they came within less than a mile of the Persians—then, instead of halting, as most armies did when confronting each other for the first time, and reconnoitering the ground and method of attack, or indulging in long-winded parleys—the Greeks *sprang forward and attacked on a run!*

Down the sloping plain they charged, gaining impetus at every step—row behind row, spears bristling, shields flashing, shouting hoarse cries of defiance—down they charged, irresistibly—the Greek phalanx! [1]

[1] This form of attack has been used in warfare ever since that time. The Greek phalanx is also the original of the "flying wedge" used in so many college rushes.

Great was the astonishment of the foe! A pigmy army not only defying Persia, but actually hurling itself at a superior force! In the words of Herodotus:

"The Persians, therefore, when they saw the Greeks coming at full speed, made ready to receive them, although it seemed to them that the Athenians were bereft of their senses, and bent upon their own destruction; for they saw a mere handful of men coming on at a run without either horsemen or archers. Such was the opinion of the barbarians. But the Athenians in close array fell upon them, and fought in a manner worthy of being recorded. They were the first of the Greeks, so far as I know, who introduced the custom of charging the enemy at a run, and they were likewise the first who dared look upon the Median garb and to face men clad in that fashion. Until this time the very name of the Medes had been a terror to the Greeks to hear.

"The two armies fought together on the plain of Marathon for a length of time [continues the old historian] and in the mid battle, where the Persians themselves and the Sacæ had their place, the barbarians were victorious and broke and pursued the Greeks into the inner country. But on the two wings the Athenians and the Platæans defeated the enemy. Having so done, they suffered the routed barbarians to fly at their ease, and joining the two wings in one, fell upon those who had broken their own center, and fought and con-

quered them. These likewise fled, and now the Athenians hung upon the runaways and cut them down, chasing them all the way to the shore, on reaching which they laid hold of the ships and called loudly for fire."

And in the thick of the fray could be seen the plumed helmet of Miltiades and close beside him Phidippides, here, yonder, and everywhere; for officers, even generals, in those old days, took the brunt of the attack with their men. Now and again Miltiades would turn swiftly to the youth and shout some instructions to him; and Phidippides would go on a run to another officer.

Toward the close of that brilliant day, he came up to Miltiades with downcast eyes. "I have ill tidings to report to you," he said; "when I essayed to convey your last word to Callimachus, I found that he had fallen."

It was true; this brave general lost his life while in the thick of a charge.

"But his men?" queried Miltiades anxiously.

"They are fighting with redoubled vigor," said the aide.

" 'Tis well."

And this for the nonce was the only tribute that Miltiades paid to his fellow general. Lives did not matter just then—even that of Callimachus or his own—it was the battle that mattered.[1]

[1] The enemy, says Herodotus, lost 6,400 men on that disastrous day; while the Greeks lost less than two hundred.

It was a disastrous day for the Persians. The dreaded army of Darius was shattered by a handful and was fleeing on what ships they could drag away from the shore. Tangled wreckage, flaming, strewed the sea everywhere, and floating bodies of the barbarians.

And when Miltiades saw that the victory was indeed theirs, he cried:

"Phidippides, go back and tell the tidings to Athens!"

Phidippides saluted and departed on a run. It was naught to him that he had already run many weary miles that day. The last words of his chief were ringing in his ears: "Go back and tell the tidings to Athens!" Aye, he would run as he had never run before!

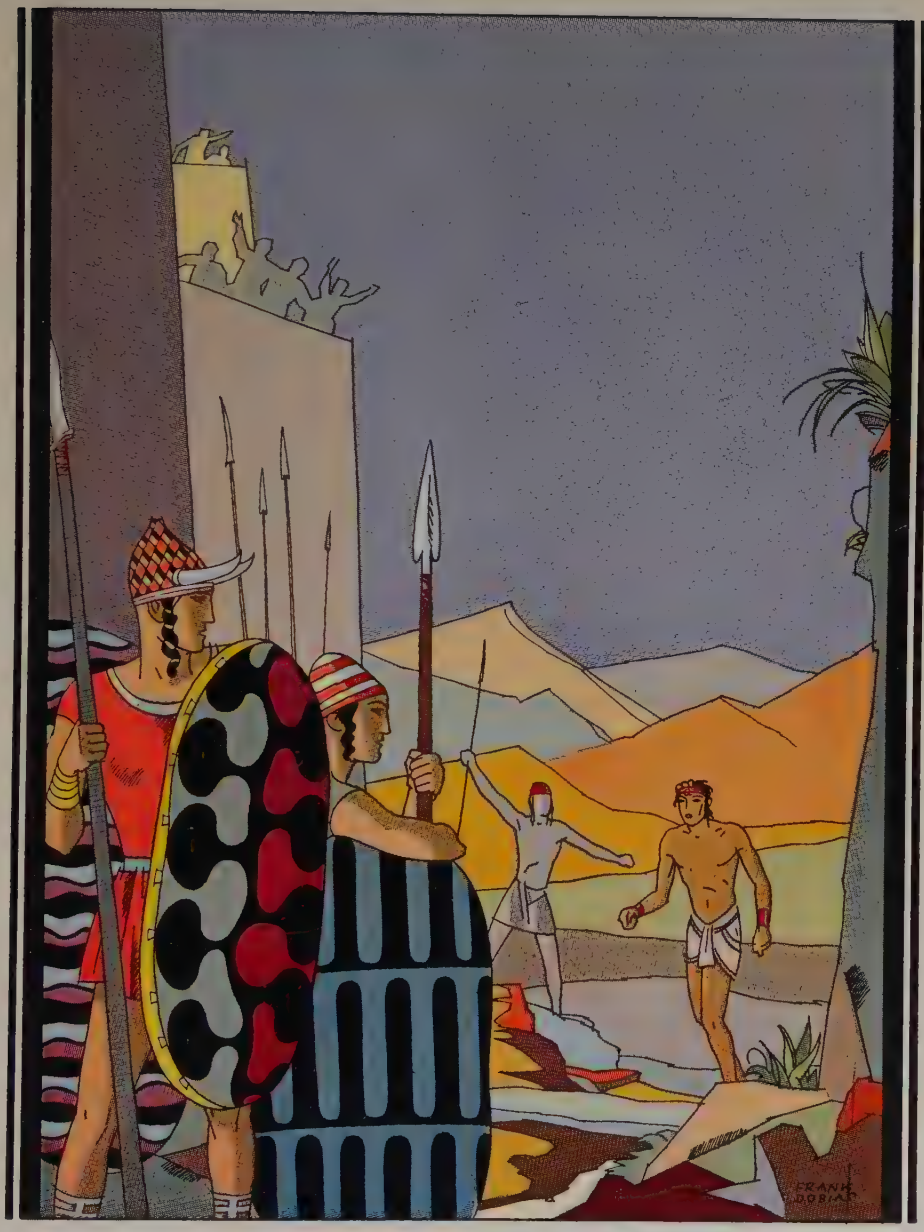
Setting out at top speed, as though the distance were a furlong, instead of more than a score of miles, he dashed along the road that led to the city. At first he was handicapped by the men and equipment of battle, and some he thrust aside almost rudely as he strove to make his way along. Then, as the tumult and struggling grew less and less and the battlefield was left behind, his faithful limbs struck their old stride. Not for nothing, he exulted, had been his long years of training in the gymnasia and palæstra—not for nothing the contests in the Games, ending with his greatest triumph as winner of the pentathlon. His exultation now was not mere vainglory; it was because all this arduous training had fitted him for his supreme test—

the great run to Sparta, and now this journey home!

How they would rejoice, he thought, to hear of this marvelous victory! But yet they must be on their guard. The Persian fleet was not yet defeated, and within a day or more might attack the city itself. It was his task to bear the news—yes, to bear the news quickly. And perhaps in time to come, when men sang the praises of the great general who won the victory, they might also sing of the messenger who brought the word.

How tired he was getting! He must slacken up a trifle. In his eagerness he had broken training rules and was sprinting at too great a pace for the long distance. But no! He would not slacken! Athens was waiting—yearning—to get the tidings—to learn whether they were to be slave or free. On he pressed with a fresh spurt, ignoring alike the strain of muscle and the warning throb of his overtaxed heart. Up a hill he panted, over its crest, down its slope, and out across the dusty plain that led to Athens.

How long those last furlongs were! He had never feared distance before—not even when he ran the long miles to Sparta. He had gloried in meeting Space and overcoming it with Time. All his life he had fought it as an enemy, and had triumphed. But now his breath came in shuddering gasps; it warned him to stop, to give Nature a chance to come to his aid. At any time but this, he would have heeded the warning. Highly trained athlete that he was, he knew the signs. The



THE RUNNER STAGGERED TOWARD THEM, WHILE THEY ON THE WALLS HELD THEIR BREATH.

terrible strain could not be kept up much longer without something giving way. But—there was *Athens*—waiting to get the news! Doggedly he pressed on.

Just at sundown the anxious watchers on the walls saw a runner come staggering in their direction. He ran blindly as one who carried himself forward by instinct and will, rather than power. Once or twice he stumbled and almost fell in his tracks—then he straightened up and jogged on. His head sagged upon his breast, his mouth was opened wide, his eyes were bloodshot. Could this be—yes, it *was*—Phidippides, their champion runner, their idol!

Out ran swift men to meet him, to stay him up in the final yards. Out ran boys, to jog along, cheering, and to see what they could see. While they on the walls held their breath— What news brought he? They dreaded to think, they feared to hope! Their runner in such a state boded ill!

A few more yards to the city walls. Phidippides shook himself free from the would-be helpers, his head rocked from side to side, he was straining as though each step were a mile. He passed inside the city gate, gasping painfully for air.

The market-place was white with people who were streaming in—eager, anxious, curious—from all sides. The archons had hard work pushing their way through the crowd.

"What news, what news, Phidippides?"

The runner staggered toward them. Then a tri-

umphant gleam came into his blinded eyes. Flinging an arm above his head, in a hoarse, broken voice he cried:

"Victory is ours! Athens is saved!"

Blood gushed from his lips, and he fell dead.

In ages that have elapsed since that far-off day, men have told of Marathon, and they have not forgot the runner who carried the news of that splendid victory. In the course of centuries the Olympic Games have been revived, and the nations of the earth have striven in good-willed rivalry, emulating the Greeks of old. And one of the chief features of the Games is always the Marathon Race, run for a distance of twenty-six miles by the speediest runners of the world, in honor of the man who gave his life to carry the good news from Marathon.

Chapter IV

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

This is a tale of how disaster was plotted against the Jews and how it was averted by Queen Esther's swift messengers, whose loyalty was dearer to them than life itself.

(Time: 482 B.C.)

IT was a day of feasting and gladness in the kingdom of the Medes and Persians; for it was the third year of the reign of Xerxes and he was showing off his power to his assembled princes and nobles. But Benoni the Jew, Keeper of the King's Post, was growing bored and impatient. Now as he chatted idly with Mordecai, his cousin, within the gate of the royal palace at Susa, he voiced his displeasure, albeit in low tones.

"Hark thee, Mordecai," he said, "methinks the great King Xerxes grows slothful with much power. For seven days and nights has his court been given over to feasting, music and dancing, and meanwhile our young men stand idle. I like it not."

"Thy young men may soon have plenty of exercise," returned Mordecai, smiling. "Begrudge not their

horses, their mules, and their dromedaries a little rest. And in sooth, be not misled by the sound of revelry within the palace—lest the summons of the King catch thee unawares."

"I am not napping, neither are my messengers," retorted Benoni, with a little warmth; for he was touchy over the Post service, a fact that his cousin well knew. "Have I not kept my steeds constantly saddled and bridled? And for what?—this!"

He motioned scornfully at a new party of revelers who were just arriving at the palace. Four lords brilliantly decked out in gold and brocade and mounted on Arabian steeds were acting as escort to a palanquin rich in purple and gold hangings, carried on the shoulders of four husky Ethiopians. The carriers set their burden down carefully at the gate, and the courtiers, dismounting, opened the door of the chair and assisted, with many bows and flourishes, two women richly clad, who gave Benoni and Mordecai only a single haughty glance as they swept up the broad stairs.

"And forsooth, why not?" asked Mordecai craftily. "Is not Ahasuerus [1] master of the world? Is he not lord over an hundred and twenty-seven provinces, stretching from India in the East, to Ethiopia in the West? Has he not lately subdued all Egypt? Why should he not take his ease? We Jews, in any event, have naught to say. He has brought us captive from Babylon, whither our fathers were led from Jerusalem.

[1] The Jewish name for Xerxes was Ahasuerus. See Book of Esther.

We are an alien people far from home, and the Medes and Persians are lords of the world."

"Not entirely so," replied Benoni, and he waved his hand toward the west. "How of the Greeks? Twice have they withstood the might and power of Persian hosts. Darius the Great was himself no match for them at Marathon." [1]

"That pigmy nation?" retorted Mordecai contemptuously; for it irked him that, where the Jews had failed, the Greeks had won. "That pigmy nation? I know something of the King's plans and betray no confidence when I say that soon will he gather together the mightiest fleet and the greatest army the world has ever seen, and Greece will be brought to her knees. But if I mistake not, the idleness which thou didst complain of is about to be rudely broken. Hither comes Biztha, the King's chamberlain, in much haste."

As he finished speaking, Biztha neared them, his flowing robes trailing behind him.

"Hark thee, Benoni," he began at once, "saddle and bridle thy horses, thy mules, thy camels, and thy young dromedaries—every available beast—without delay. And come thou thyself to receive the King's letter. See that thy young men ride swiftly—or their heads will be the forfeit."

Benoni bowed. "It shall be done," he said. "Do thou, Mordecai my cousin, bid my Chief Rider, Firdusi, make all things ready. Likewise, pray summon Torah,

[1] See "The Runner Who Told of Victory," preceding chapter.

thy kinsman, and tell him to make ready for a journey."

"That will gladden his heart," said Mordecai, and set out at once, while Benoni just as expeditiously followed Biztha into the presence of the King.

Xerxes the Great sat in a private apartment busily dictating his message to his Chief Scribe, while a score of others sat making copies, some in one alien tongue and others in another. As for the Chief Scribe, he inscribed the original, or official, message, in Persian characters on moist clay tablets, which when hard would preserve the letters for all time. But the letters to be carried into the farther parts of the kingdom were written upon parchment, with a stylus, or blunt pen, in indelible ink.

As they sat writing, my readers may be interested to look over Benoni's shoulder and see how they wrote letters in the fifth century before the time of Christ. The Chief Scribe made use of the Persian alphabet, which consisted of cuneiform or wedge-shaped letters, each letter standing for a vowel sound, or a vowel and consonant combined. There were thirty-six of these, not counting symbols for such words as "King," "Land," and "God." As fast as he had completed one tablet, he passed it over to a scribe who wrote upon parchment and perchance in another tongue. For, as Mordecai had said, Xerxes was lord over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces and master almost of the world. To the people of India went messages in the Brahman script; to Babylonia, now a subject nation, the cunei-

form letters used for many centuries by both Babylonia and Assyria; but to many others went letters in the Aramaic tongue, which was akin to the Hebrew but was used all over Asia Minor. In whatever tongue, however, the royal message was the same:

"To the Overlord of the Province—
"Greeting:

"This is the command of the Great King, Xerxes, Ruler of the World, to his faithful subjects, and sealed with his Great Seal. Wisdom and courage be your portion, and obedience to the King, and length of days.

"Know, therefore, that while I sat at meat in my royal palace in Susa, I did bid my Queen, Vashti, appear before me and my lords; but the said Queen Vashti did disobey me and willfully refuse to present herself—thus not only flouting my royal authority but showing disrespect to my princes and all my people. She has set an unseemly example and can no longer be Queen. I have deposed her this day.

"The King has spoken!"

As soon as the busy scribes could transcribe this decree—for such it now was and a part of the laws of the Medes and Persians—the Chief Scribe laid their copies before the King himself for his signature—an office which he would entrust to no underling. Drawing his signet ring from his thumb, he pressed it firmly into the wax at the bottom. The parchment was then

rolled and sealed with another wafer of wax, which also bore the King's Great Seal. It was death for any idle hands to tamper with these seals.

So rapidly did the scribes work, that within an hour all of the one hundred and twenty-seven letters had been entrusted to Benoni, and by him to Firdusi, and so to the slim, sinewy riders lined up at the palace gates. And within the hour, such was the excellence of the Post, their swiftly moving steeds might have been seen riding away from the walls of Susa toward every point of the compass. Night and day they would ride on, to their destination or to the first relief station, until the message to the farthest point in the kingdom was delivered.

The last of the riders to be summoned was Torah, the young Jew whom Mordecai was sent to call. Right gladly he had answered, for it was a post he had longed for, for months. Only his age had held him back; but now he had reached manhood, and as Benoni looked him over with critical eye, he could find no fault in him. Torah was of the tribe of Benjamin. He was of medium height and at first glance seemed slight of frame, but the muscles rippled over his arms and shoulders. And furthermore, the riders were never heavy men, lest it make too hard going for their mounts. He was clad like a Median soldier. A soft felt cap covered his head, but stray black curls fell over his ears. He wore a short-sleeved tunic on the upper part of his body, and coarse trousers on his legs. Over the tunic

was a woven coat of mail, made very light, with thin bronze plates overlapping like the scales of a fish. For arms he carried a dagger in a sheath at his belt, and a bow and a quiver of arrows slung over one shoulder. The latter were more for protection from wild beasts than from men, as he wore the distinctive colors of the King's Post, and it was death to molest him. He carried a metal canister slung over his other shoulder, containing the King's letter and sealed with his Seal.

"Hark thee, Torah," admonished Benoni, "a long journey do I give thee, and an important one. Thou art to ride toward the setting sun until thou comest to the River Tigris. A relief courier will meet thee on the farther side, and to him wilt thou entrust the King's letter. He will ride on through Mesopotamia. As for thee, I desire thee to establish posts at the Tigris and the Euphrates, on the way to Damascus. Thou wilt rest by night and ride by day, and thou wilt follow the caravan route of the Midianites across the Desert of Syria, until thou reachest Damascus. Give these messages to men of thine own race, even the Jews, and say unto them: 'Benoni, Keeper of the King's Post, sends greeting. He desires picked young men from among the Israelites, to serve as relay messengers in Palestine.' "

"It shall be done, my lord," answered the youth.

"When thou hast completed this mission, come again to me," continued Benoni.

"It shall be done. Within the waxing and waning of two moons, Jehovah willing, I shall have returned."

"May Jehovah speed and prosper thee," replied Benoni, gravely but kindly; for he liked the looks of the young Benjamite, and he was of his own tribe.

After the King's wrath against Vashti was exhausted, he bethought himself to secure a new queen and to give Vashti's royal estate to some one better than she. And again the messengers of Benoni were put into service and Xerxes' decree went out to all his provinces:

> "Thus saith the King! Let the fairest maidens of the realm be brought before me, at the palace in Susa; and let the maiden who pleases the King be Queen instead of Vashti."

Now Mordecai had a cousin named Esther, whom he had adopted at the death of his uncle. Esther was young and beautiful to look upon, and good withal. And when Mordecai heard of the King's decree, he made haste to find her and proposed that she present herself with other maidens at the King's palace, as perhaps she might find favor in his eyes.

Esther was loath to accede to his wishes, but Mordecai urged her humble state as his ward and her duty to the Jewish people, who were even now scarcely free from oppression.

Then, indeed, she did present herself at the King's palace with other maidens, and in due time when the King set eyes upon her, he honored her before all others and selected her to be his Queen.

And Xerxes heaped great honors upon her, while Mordecai himself became a personage of importance overnight. He took his seat at the gate as by right, and made note of all who came in and all who went out; and as the servants of the palace passed, they bowed low to him. And many of the courtiers did likewise.

And upon a time, as he Mordecai sat inside the gate of the palace, he overheard two of the King's chamberlains plotting to lay hands upon Xerxes and slay him. Mordecai hastened to tell Queen Esther, that she might warn the King that his life was in danger. And when Xerxes heard, his wrath knew no bounds, and he ordered the faithless chamberlains to be seized and put to death, as was done, and Esther did he honor the more because of what she had done to save his life. But Mordecai kept his place inside the palace gate as before.

Among the passersby was Haman, whom the King had now elevated to be Chief Chamberlain—a man so haughty that his neck fairly bent back with pride—a wheedling sycophant in the presence of Xerxes, but bold and unscrupulous with all others. As he strode along with head held high in air, he expected all in the court to do him obeisance. But Mordecai, self-appointed keeper of the gate, did not bow, nor did he

acknowledge his presence by so much as the flicker of an eyelash.

Haman was filled with wrath when he saw that Mordecai did not reverence his authority, and cast about as to how he might do him injury. He made inquiries of the servants and found, to his delight, that Mordecai was a Jew—one of the accursed race who had been in captivity in Babylon for so many years. His vengeance would be deep. The next time he was closeted with the King, he led up to his subject craftily.

"O great Xerxes," he said, "there is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the King's loyal subjects in all the provinces of the kingdom. Their ways are diverse from the Medes and the Persians, and they do not keep the King's laws. They worship their own gods and have laws of their own. Their boldness knows no bounds. Therefore it is not to the King's interest to harbor them. If it please the King, let it be written that these shameless people shall be destroyed. And I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those that have charge of the business, for the King's treasuries."

The King was wroth at the effrontery of the Jews and incensed with their treason against his throne.

"Do as it seems good to thee," answered Xerxes, "even let them be destroyed in what manner thou deemest best and take therefor whatever moneys are required out of the King's treasury. Send forth couriers to all my provinces."

The exultant Haman lost no time. Armed with the King's authority, he called in the Chief Scribe and all his assistants, and they wrote out the dire message which his cunning brain devised. It was addressed, as before, to the lords over every province and to every people in their own tongue; and as each scroll was finished it was sealed with the King's Seal. This was the burden of the order: The rulers were ordered to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish (for such was the legal wording) all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day; and all their goods were to be taken from them. A given day was set for this dreadful slaughter so that, at one terrible stroke, all the Jews should die.

Benoni, Keeper of the King's Post, was again called in, to take charge of the letters and deliver them into the hands of his young men. As he gathered their import, he well-nigh fainted. The message, once sent out, as he well knew, would become a part of the law and could not be altered; and he himself must act as his own people's executioner. Yet he dared not hesitate. Holding himself in control with an iron will, he took the messages and hastened to the gate.

His perturbation did not escape the keen glance of Mordecai, and in a few hasty words they went over the dire situation. The edict would be common knowledge in the palace and the city within a few hours. What was to be done?

"Come what may," announced Benoni firmly, "I

shall send out this letter with all speed. It is my duty. Jehovah himself will protect us."

"Thou art right," answered Mordecai. "But Jehovah helpeth those that help themselves. I myself will hasten unto my cousin, even Esther, the Queen, and bid her make supplication with the King in our behalf. She is herself doomed by this decree, and thou and I."

As they conversed and Benoni made ready the canisters containing the letters, a young man entered the room and paid his respects to them both.

"Torah!" they exclaimed, and greeted him warmly.

"I have completed my mission, my lord," said he, addressing Benoni. "The posts have been set up all along the borders of Canaan and across the great desert even unto the confines of Mesopotamia. I await my lord's further pleasure."

Benoni's eyes lighted up as he looked at the comely young man, and realized that his confidence in him was justified. But immediately his face clouded again.

"Woe is me!" he exclaimed. "We are but perfecting the machine for our own destruction!"

And he told Torah the contents of the letter he was then sealing up for delivery. The young Benjamite started and turned pale. Then recovering himself he said: "It is the King's letter and must be sped on its way. And if it is the will of Jehovah that we perish, we perish!"

"Spoken like a true Israelite!" said Benoni, clapping him on the shoulder. "Bid Firdusi come hither, and

tell the riders to make themselves ready with all speed."

Torah bowed and went out. And such was the loyalty of the Post that, despite the fact that not a few of the young men were Jews, all sped forward upon their routes and spared not their beasts.

To Torah was entrusted the task of carrying the edict westward to the borders of the Syrian Desert, where the first of his relay riders was to follow the caravan route across to Palestine. All went well with him for a time, for the road was well marked and much traveled, leading from Susa to the south of Babylon. But beyond the great River Euphrates when he met his relay, there was trouble.

The young man whom he had chosen balked at carrying the message further. He was new to the Post and had no such loyalty as would make him carry this terrible threat against his own people. Torah had told him the contents of the letter, lest it be lost or stolen on the way.

"Jehovah forbid that I give such aid in striking down mine own people," he said; and nothing could budge him.

Torah, seeing his stubborn attitude, wasted no more words on him.

"Stand aside," he commanded. "I am riding for the King and on the King's business. Give me thy steed, for my own is jaded, and tarry here until I return."

Torah had then been in the saddle twenty-four hours, but taking the bridle of his fresh mount from his unwilling assistant, he pressed on into the desert. On and on he rode, his tired brain a whirl of conflicting emotions. He was bringing death to his kindred, but he must press on.

Toward nightfall he dismounted at a little water-hole to refresh himself and his horse. He would eat and lie down for three hours, until the moon came up, and then go on, he planned.

Scarcely had he stretched out on the sand than, such was his extreme weariness, he fell asleep. He was awakened by a rude grasp of his shoulder and sat up dazedly to see himself surrounded by a group of savage men. They were Midianites, bandits of the desert, and ancestors to the Bedouins who for centuries have roamed these wastes.

Their leader, or sheik, bade him stand up, and saw by the waning light that he wore the King's livery and carried his mail.

"A likely post-rider," the sheik jeered, "sleeping like a jackal out on the sand!"

"Thou art right," answered Torah, but looking the keen-eyed robber straight in the eye. "I can only plead my own necessity. For a day and a half I have ridden without relay, and must soon press on."

"And why no relay?" asked the sheik, willing to learn all that he could regarding the King's mail.

"There was one awaiting me on the river's bank,

but he proved unfaithful, so I must needs press on alone."

"Would he not ride for you?"

"No."

The sheik whistled by sucking his breath inward through his teeth.

"This is a strange saying," he said. "I fear not the great King Xerxes, for the desert is wide and the conies know no more paths in it than I do. I shall let thee pass on thy way in peace only on condition that thou tellest me the whole of thy story."

Torah hesitated only a moment. Why, indeed, should he not tell him the thing that, by now, was bruited abroad throughout Persia?

"I shall tell thee, O sheik," he replied; "not because I fear thee, but because it has become common knowledge. The great King has been badly advised by an enemy of the Jews, and has issued an edict that upon a certain day they are to be destroyed. This is the message that I carry to Palestine."

The bandit leader looked at him shrewdly. "And thou art a Jew?" he asked.

Torah nodded his head.

"And the rider who refused—he, too, was a Jew?"

Torah again nodded.

A chorus of catcalls and laughs came from the dirty men who had clustered close about to hear his story. "This is a good one!" they cried. But at the uplifted hand of the sheik they fell silent.

"Young man," said he, "I do not know whether to commend thy loyalty, or to tell thee thou art a plain fool. We Midianites have no love for the Jews, and so far as I am concerned, thou canst ride on with thy message. But I like such loyalty in my followers. If thou wilt forget this message and forget thou art a Jew, I will welcome thee into our ranks. Only the men of the desert are free!"

"I give thee thanks, O sheik," answered Torah. "But know that, all my life long, I have dreamed of the time when I could carry the post. It must be in my blood. And now shall I fail at the first test?"

The sheik extended a brown and sinewy hand. "I like the spirit within thee," he said. "Go on. And if any others of the men of Midia oppose thy passage, tell them that Sheik Ilderim is thy friend."

Three days later, such was his speed, he had reached the westward confines of the desert. Here he found a welcome relay, but taking counsel within himself he did not tell this rider of the letter's contents. Instead, after the briefest of rests, he changed mounts and himself rode on to Damascus. He delivered the letter safely into the hands of the Governor and then, at the first opportunity, sought out some of his own tribe.

"I return at once to the capital," he announced, after he had told them all concerning the plot against the Jews. "And as for you, make ready to defend yourselves. Do not suffer yourselves to be slaughtered like sheep. Meanwhile, we have powerful friends at court.

The beautiful Queen Esther herself intercedeth for us."

When Torah finally reached Susa, he found the Jews weeping and wailing outside the walls, and throwing ashes over their heads. Mordecai was among them. From time to time some voice would be lifted in prayer. Thus it had been ever since the decree had gone forth, and thus it continued for two days after Torah's return. But on the third day Benoni suddenly appeared among them, waving a bit of white parchment.

"Reprieve! Reprieve!" he shouted.

It was true. For Mordecai had prevailed upon Esther to see the King, that her people might be saved. She went humbly into the King's courtyard—for it was death for any to enter unsummoned. When Xerxes saw her, he bade her come before him and make known her wishes. And Esther begged that the King honor her at a banquet she would prepare for him, at which also Haman should be present. It was done even as Esther wished, and when the King had eaten of the splendid repast, he was pleased with Esther and asked her what boon she wished that he grant her; for indeed it would be hers, be it even to the half of his Kingdom.

Then Esther related to him how Haman sought vengeance and death of all the Jews because Mordecai had refused to do him obeisance, and even now had prepared a gibbet fifty cubits high whereon to hang him. It was even Mordecai, she told him, who had discovered the conspiracy of the two chamberlains who would

have slain Xerxes and had told Esther that she might save his life.

When the King heard all, he was exceedingly angry with Haman, and proceeded to humiliate him. First he ordered him to do honor to Mordecai by arraying him in fine raiment and taking him through the streets of Susa on a beautiful horse; and when this was done, Xerxes caused Haman to be seized and hanged upon the gibbet fifty cubits high, even that which he had prepared for Mordecai.

And Xerxes also gave Esther the lives of her people, and because he could not countermand his previous edict, which was law, the King bade his scribes to write new letters to all the provinces. This was the gladsome message:

> "The Jews are hereby permitted to stand for their lives, to resist attack, and to meet steel with steel!"

A great cheer went up from the throng when they heard the new decree, which changed into a hymn of praise led by Mordecai.[1]

"Bid thy young men ride as they have never ridden before," he said. "For the lives of a whole people are at stake."

[1] This famous story of the bravery of the young Queen is written in the Book of Esther, and to this day the Jews celebrate their salvation by the feast of the Purim, so called because a Pur, or lot, had been cast against them.

"Have no fear," answered Benoni, a fierce light of endeavor shining in his eyes. "Before even I came to thee, I summoned Torah. Even now the steeds are being saddled, and so swift shall be the speeding of the tidings that it shall be known to the end of time how fared the letter of Queen Esther!"

North, south, east, and west rode the men in the King's livery. As for Torah, he would not entrust his message to another, but again rode the long way that led toward Palestine. At the farther side of the Euphrates he fell in with the new relay that he had established, but instead of pausing, he rode with him on into the desert, as more than one horse was here in waiting.

A day's journey in the sandy waste as they rode together, they suddenly descried a small band of horsemen spurring in their direction. With loud cries, swooping from the left and right, they tried to cut the two post-riders off.

"Ride straight on for thy life!" ordered Torah of his comrade. "As they close in, I shall make a feint of attacking and divert their attention. Do thou ride on with the mail."

The other nodded and pressed spurs into his horse. Torah, on his part, seized his bow from his shoulder, fitted an arrow, and swiftly let fly. It struck the horse of the foremost bandit in the neck and, after staggering a few steps, the animal pitched headlong. Again a missile was launched from Torah's bow, wounding an-

other horse in the flank. He had purposely tried not to hit the men. But nothing angers an Arab more than to have his steed injured; for it is often valued more highly by its rider than wife or children. The pursuers turned from the first man and closed in on Torah. A vicious blow from the butt end of a spear sent him reeling from his saddle unconscious.

When he recovered his senses, it was to find his hands bound behind his back, and his fellow rider also in the same predicament. A familiar face and voice greeted him.

"Ah, my fine post-rider! We meet again! So thou wouldst kill my horses and thwart my will!"

It was Sheik Ilderim.

"The will of the great King Xerxes is more powerful than that of any of the tribes of the desert, and his arm is longer," replied Torah boldly.

"Ah, sayest thou so?" asked the leader, sucking his breath within his teeth in his habitual whistle. "But why ridest thou so madly now? Art still trying to kill off thy countrymen?"

"Nay, O sheik," began Torah—then checked himself. The Midianites did not love the Jews, as the bandit himself had said. What effect would these new tidings have upon him? But only a moment he hesitated, the while he was conscious of the eyes of the sheik and his band fastened upon him.

"I shall tell thee the truth as always, O sheik. Thine eyes are keen of vision and all our ways are in the keep-

ing of the great Jehovah. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Know, then, that I carry a reprieve unto my people. They are bidden to stand against their enemies and to meet steel with steel."

Ilderim looked at him thoughtfully. "Why, then, should I let thee ride on? If I hold thy hand, the Jews of Canaan will be blotted out, and the land they seized from us of old, in the time of Moses and Joshua, may be ours again."

"True! True!" shouted the bandits. "Let us kill these messengers!" They crowded around the two riders menacingly. But the latter did not flinch.

Torah now resolved upon a bold move.

"The word of Sheik Ilderim is his bond—is it not so?" he challenged.

"It is so," replied the leader, drawing himself up proudly.

"Well, thus saith Sheik Ilderim: 'If any of the men of Midian oppose thy passage, tell them that Sheik Ilderim is thy friend!' "

The grim features of the bandit relaxed. "Thus indeed did he say," he acknowledged. "And he further said: 'I like thee well.' Hear and see, then, the way in which Sheik Ilderim keeps his word."

He turned and at a signal a beautiful white Arabian mare was brought forward. "This is the apple of my eye," he continued, "but henceforth she is thine. Ride on and save thy people. And tell the great King Xerxes that I do this not out of fear for him, but friend-

ship. With an army of such men as this he can indeed sweep the world."

The bonds of the two riders were cut, food and drink were given them, and again they rode away; but not before these two men of alien strain, Ilderim and Torah, had again struck hands and pledged friendship.

Torah delivered his letter and his task was well done.

When word came to the King of the marvelous celerity with which his letters had been dispatched, he was greatly pleased. He received Benoni in private audience and planned with him how the royal posts could be still further improved.

"Draw on the royal treasury for what thou wilt," he instructed, "but make the Persian posts the model of the world."

And so he did. Better roads were constructed. Relay stations were so well built and fortified that in the course of time towns grew up around them, to become the cities of later years. As for Torah, he became Inspector for the Western District, and more than once thereafter met with his friend, the sheik.

The service within a few years became so renowned that Herodotus, the Greek historian, although of a nation at war with the hosts of Persia, gave unstinted praise to its excellence.

"Nothing mortal travels as fast as these Persian messengers [he wrote]. The entire plan is a Per-

sian invention, and this is the method of it. Along the whole line of road there are men, they say, stationed with horses in number equal to the number of days which the journey takes, allowing a man and horse to each day; and these men will not be hindered from accomplishing, at their best speed, the district to which they have to go, either by snow, or rain, or heat, or the darkness of night. The first rider delivers his dispatch to the second, and the second passes it to the third; and so it is borne from hand to hand along the whole line, like the light in the torch race, which the Greeks celebrate to Vulcan."

The generous tribute of Herodotus to the posts of his enemies has made Benoni's riders famous for all time. Twenty-five centuries after the time when the events in this story took place, a great post office was erected in the greatest city in the world; and over its portals the builders could find no finer or more fitting inscription than the words of the ancient historian. The spirit of that far-off post-rider, Torah, is still the proudest boast of the mail-carrier of to-day:

"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

Chapter V

ON THE OLD ROMAN POST ROAD

How a young courier found favor in the eyes of the Emperor Trajan, and by bravery and shrewdness helped his Emperor to defeat the Dacians.

(Time: 98 A.D.)]

"THY name, Courier?"

"Laurentius."

"When didst leave Rome?"

"Two days agone."

"Thou didst travel speedily."

The older man paused in the reading of his letter—the most important that he had received in his whole life—to glance appraisingly at the courier. Himself a general and a keen judge of men, he found much to admire in the bearing of the quiet, lithe young rider who stood before him in the garb of a *cursus publicus,* or official dispatch bearer.

"Knowest thou the contents of this letter?" the general asked, eyeing him keenly.

"Only its purport, my lord. I was bidden by the Senate to deliver it to you in person, and if any harm were threatened me I was to destroy the message,

and say to thee: 'Cæsar is dead; long live Cæsar!' "

And suiting the action to the word, Laurentius bent the knee.

"Young man," said the general, smiling, "thou art the first to salute the new Cæsar. Pray the gods, thou wilt not be the last!"

The scene was a military camp on the River Rhine; the time, A.D. 98. Marcus Ulpius Trajanus, a Spaniard by birth, but a Roman by tradition and training, had risen in the army by sheer force of merit until he was made a consul. On the death of Nerva, the Emperor, the imperial purple had fallen upon his shoulders—the first of foreign birth to receive this honor. But Trajan —as we of a later day call him—richly deserved this highest of posts in the world. A born leader of men, he not only won splendid victories, but he also preserved discipline and morale. There were no mutinies in his camp.

The letter which Laurentius handed him was the official notification that the Senate had chosen him as the new Emperor. It was written—strange to say—upon a wax tablet, but there was a purpose in this. The courier was to destroy the writing by smoothing out the wax, if danger threatened. In ordinary times a public courier and his message were sacred. To tamper with one or the other was punishable by death. But in a time like this, when a change of dynasties was under way, none knew what conspiracy might be hatched up. However, Laurentius had ridden so swiftly, that he

had reached the Rhine, unmolested, in two days' time.

"With a fresh horse and a little rest, thou canst ride back to Rome for me?" Trajan's command was given in the form of a question, for it was his way with men.

The young courier's face lighted up both at the manner of speech and the implied compliment.

"I can start at once, O Cæsar!" he cried.

"Nay, not so. It is now sundown, and I have not yet composed my letter. Tarry overnight, and with the sunrise I will send thee forth."

Laurentius bent the knee again and withdrew.

The letter which the new Emperor wrote that night with his stylus on a plate of wax was not at all the sort of thing that Cæsars were in the habit of inditing. It was not bombastic, boastful, or threatening. Instead, the writer thanked the Senate in modest terms, promised to obey its laws, and to respect the life of every man of worth. Most remarkable of all, Trajan said that he would not come to Rome at present, but would wait until he had completed his campaign against the Teutons.

"Young man," said he, as he gave the letter into the hands of Laurentius, the next morning, "thou wert the first to greet me as Cæsar, and thou shalt be the first to whom I shall assign an office. I hereby constitute thee my personal courier. If any man essay to stop thee henceforth, say unto him, 'I am Trajan's courier!' "

He drew a signet ring from his finger and placed it upon that of Laurentius. The delighted courier fell

upon both knees and lifted up the hem of Trajan's toga and kissed it reverently.

"I am your man until death, O Cæsar!" he murmured.

Not for nothing was Trajan a judge of men. As he looked into the blue eyes of the messenger, he knew that Laurentius spoke the truth.

Weeks and months went by before Trajan turned his face toward Rome, and meanwhile his chosen courier passed back and forth many times. Indeed, it was a whole year before the new Emperor went down to be crowned. When he did march south, his royal progress was certainly remarkable. He did not travel in pomp and pride, or with a stately train of followers. On the contrary, he went quietly with only a small bodyguard. His bill for traveling expenses, when published later, made the former emperors look ridiculous.

Arrived at Rome, he disdained to use the triumphal car and white horses kept for the Emperor, but went on foot; and by his side walked Plotina, his wife. No company of soldiers kept the crowd away from them, but the throng pressed close and unguarded along the sides of the street as the brilliant soldier and simple man passed by. Such was the accession of Trajan, who was destined to go down to history as one of Rome's greatest emperors and generals.

Meanwhile, what of Laurentius? In the next few years he came to know the Roman roads throughout the empire. Even then they were the marvels of the

world. There were five great trunk lines, some of them paved with stone blocks, others with crushed rock and earth, but all so even that chariots could be driven over them smoothly, with the horses at full gallop. The first of these routes went from the capital by way of Capua to Naples and across to Sicily, where a line of boats carried the couriers to Carthage. The second branched off at Capua and went to Brundusium, and across the Adriatic toward Macedonia. The third ran via Rimini to Illyria and Pannonia (the ancient name for Hungary), and down to Byzantium (later Constantinople). The fourth went westerly via Pisa and Genoa to Spain. The fifth ran to Milan and up through the Alps to Gaul (France), Germany, and the north. It had been the route followed by Julius Cæsar when he had conquered Gaul and had not stopped until he reached Britain.

The roads were not only well paved and well kept, but they also were marked off into distances by stone posts. From this practice came our modern term of *post roads,* and the still later *post office.* The Roman mile was a little shorter than the later English mile. Gibbon, the historian, tells of one man who traveled from Antioch to Constantinople, 725 Roman miles, or 665 English miles, in five and a half days.

Frequent relay stations were placed along all the roads, with the best horses and chariots that could be bought. The bearer of important dispatches was called a *tabellarius,* and wore a large bronze shield-shaped

badge. These couriers were exclusively in the government employ and carried only public letters. The private letter writer had to wait many long centuries before he could get his letters delivered. When St. Paul was writing his famous letters to the various churches that he had visited, he frequently spoke of their being delivered by some private individual.

Even the food and other supplies at these government relay stations were for the sole use of the couriers. A law forbade their use in any other way. If a public official were traveling on state business, a courier usually went with him, and he was then entitled to fresh horses and the other accommodations of the relay stations, the same as the courier. But every item was set down on an expense slip, and the amount of food used was mentioned to the ounce. Such was Roman efficiency.

Pliny, "the Younger," who was a close friend of the Emperor Trajan, once had occasion to break this rule of the relay station, and although himself a high official, made haste to apologize, sending his reasons by the hand of Laurentius, who chanced to be riding back to Rome. His letter, which is still preserved, reads:

> "I have never, O Cæsar, accommodated any person with an order for post vehicles, or dispatched a courier provided with one, except upon your affairs. I find myself, however, at present under a sort of necessity of breaking through this fixed rule. My wife, having received an account of her grandfather's death, and being desirous to wait

upon her aunt with all possible expedition, I thought it would be unkind to deny her the use of this privilege; as the grace of so tender an office consists in the early discharge of it; and I well know that a journey which was founded in filial piety could not fail of your approbation."

The Emperor took only time to peruse hastily this letter from his friend, then wrote a kind note of reply which he sent back by Laurentius. This is what he said:

"You did me justice, my dear Pliny, by confiding in my affection towards you. Without doubt, if you had waited for my consent to forward your wife on her journey by means of those warrants which I have entrusted to your care, the use of them would not have answered your purpose; since it was proper this visit to her aunt should be made as quickly as possible."

These letters read as though they had been written in our own day, instead of eighteen hundred years ago, and I have taken time to quote them, to show what manner of man Trajan was, as well as the wonderful system of post roads, which he did so much to perfect.

Many letters which Laurentius and other couriers carried were written on wax tablets. It was the "swagger" thing for patricians and officials to scratch their letters upon these wax surfaces with a stylus; and the man who received the letter could smooth out the

wax and write his reply on the same tablet. The stylus was shaped like our lead pencils, sharp at one end, for writing, and blunt at the other, for erasing or smoothing out the surface. The wax was attached to a plate of bone or wood to give it firmness, and notebooks were made by having several of these thin sheets fastened together with rings of gold, silver, or bronze.

Egyptian papyrus, however, was a great favorite, being brought over for this purpose in ships. You have read in a preceding story how this "paper" surface was made ready for writing. Ink was made from soot and lampblack. The cuttlefish "ink" was also employed. Inks of various colors were popular, that of purple shade being especially reserved for the Emperor's use. Even gold and silver inks were made and used.

Laurentius, in his capacity of personal courier, came and went in the palace at will. The Emperor was very democratic and simple in his habits. He lived more like a country gentleman than the head of the most powerful empire on earth. He shunned ostentation and display, and seemed to fear no plots against his own life. And he was first of all a soldier, seeming to prefer the armed camp to the palace.

One morning, after he had been about three years in office, Laurentius found him in a thunder cloud. "Read this," he said, handing a letter to the courier, for he treated him as a confidant and talked freely with him about affairs of state. It was a communication

from Decebalus, King of the Dacians, and while the language was outwardly respectful, it was in effect a demand for the payment of tribute from Rome as a price for keeping the barbarians along the Danube in check.

Trajan himself had subdued the Germanic tribes along the Rhine, before coming to Rome, but those on the Danube had also given trouble for years. They were a scattered people speaking various tongues, and known as the Thracians, the Getæ, the Dacians, and others. Often in past years they had fought both Greece and Rome, and were always foes to be respected. Under Decebalus a powerful confederation had been formed, so powerful that weak emperors such as Domitian and Nerva had preferred to buy them off, rather than fight them. Now Decebalus was writing to the new Emperor to say that if a large sum of money were not sent at once "for defenses," he could not long hold the hostile tribes in check.

"The insolent barbarian!" exclaimed Trajan. "He expects me to pay tribute to him!"

He pulled a rope sharply, and, as a slave answered the tinkling of a bell, he summoned his chief secretary.

"Write thou a letter to Decebalus," he commanded crisply, "and do thou, Laurentius, make ready to set forth by high noon, carrying it thyself to him. Say to him: 'The Emperor Trajan sends greeting to the Dacians and others of his loyal subjects. Rome does not need to buy arms and men to defend her borders.

I, Trajan, will march to the borders of Dacia, prepared to treat amicably with my subjects, but they must come peaceably; otherwise I shall lay waste their country with fire and sword.' "

Trajan stopped and pondered—then continued:

"On second thought, Laurentius, I shall not send thee to-day with this message. It shall not go forward for several days. Meantime, we will order the legions into action, and will march north only a day's journey behind thy horse's hoofs."

Trajan was as good as his word. So alert was he and so well disciplined his troops, that within less than a week the legions were ready—all the men eager to go forward behind their beloved leader.

It was indeed an inspiring sight, as, out through the great northern gate of the city, filed the long line of soldiers, with Trajan riding in a chariot at their head, and himself handling the reins of the three prancing horses pulling abreast. In the chariot was an aide, his young kinsman, Hadrian, whose name was also destined to go down to history. Another trusted aide was Licinius Sura. Behind them rode the ablest generals in the army, but none so able as Trajan.[1]

What rejoiced the hearts of the army, from generals down to privates, was the fact that the intervening months in the palace had not softened him, but he was just as hardy and seasoned a campaigner as ever before.

[1] Visitors to Rome are shown to-day Trajan's Column, a shaft over a hundred feet high, with the record of his victories.

Along the broad, well-paved highway leading north proceeded the columns with all the precision of a well-oiled machine. Spots for camping, as well as relay stations, were a permanent part of this great artery. Wagons rumbled along, filled with food and other supplies. "An army travels on its stomach" is an old saying; and long ago the Romans had learned that to win victories meant to feed and clothe their soldiers well.

Meantime, Laurentius, bearing the Emperor's "defi," was riding easily one day in advance of the army. His instructions were to hold the delivery of the letter until the troops were within a day's march of the lower Danube. He was further instructed privately by Trajan to keep his ears and eyes open, to learn of any hostile moves.

At the last Roman outpost where the Emperor was to halt, the courier did a strange thing. He went to a small enclosure where some pigeons were kept and, taking one which he petted and called by name, he placed it in a small wooden cage and slung it on his back. Then, mounting a fresh horse, he rode on into the hostile land of Dacia.

Not long was he suffered to proceed unmolested. Three men came spurring furiously down the road to meet him, brandishing long spears. They were wild and savage looking, with bare arms and legs and only one garment each—a sort of tunic of wolf's skin. Laurentius reined in calmly and stopped. He was Cæsar's

messenger and accustomed to respect. But the three barbarians gave him scant consideration. They made him know by signs that he was their prisoner, and when he addressed them in Latin they shook their heads. However, they offered him no violence, but merely bade him accompany them. An hour's ride brought them to a large camp, where Laurentius, although a *cursus publicus*, was greeted with derisive jeers, especially when his captors caught sight of the bird carried on his back.

"Make pretty birdie sing to us!" they cried in their own tongue (which he understood), and then pointed and guffawed with laughter.

The general in charge, before whom he was brought, was a shade more courteous. He understood enough Latin to know Laurentius' mission, and when the latter said "Decebalus!" he nodded and gave some rapid orders in a guttural voice. A guard of ten men was assigned to the courier, to conduct him to the King, who was in another camp a day's journey distant. This guard treated Laurentius more like a prisoner than an envoy. His hands were tied behind his back. But they did not touch the bird, for all their jeering. The last part of the way was made through a thick forest in which the trail was only wide enough for the men to ride single file. The guard behind Laurentius seemed to delight in carrying his lance with the point a scant yard behind the Roman's body.

However, Decebalus himself was no mere barbarian,

as Laurentius discovered when led before him. He was clad like a Greek, spoke with culture in several tongues, and had been smart enough to use the best weapons of his enemies and to meet stratagem with stratagem. He had welded the tribes together through the power of his own genius and, in times past, had made the Roman emperors themselves tremble. But he was yet to meet with Trajan.

In his camp his word was law and his most potent weapon was fear. He tried the same tactics when Laurentius was brought before him.

"Dog of a Roman!" he thundered. "What brings thee here?"

The young courier drew himself up proudly and gave the King eye for eye.

"I am *cursus publicus*—and the personal messenger of Cæsar," he announced proudly.

"What word then bringest thou?" Decebalus blustered again.

"I have Cæsar's letter," replied Laurentius in a stern voice. It went much against his grain to see the Roman authority thus flouted.

Decebalus scowled at him as he took the letter, and after he had perused it he grew black with rage.

"Knowest the contents of this letter?" he demanded, waving it excitedly in his face.

"I do."

"Well, were it from any other than Trajan, the bearer of it would suffer death. Decebalus is not ac-

customed to being told what to do, and what not to do. Tell him that for me. No—wait"—his eye took on a crafty look—"I shall hold thee as a guest in my camp until we can determine what manner of reply to make to this Trajan."

"My master bade me return at once," began Laurentius.

"Hold thy tongue, sirrah!" thundered the King. "Know that in Dacia none gives orders but Decebalus."

Nevertheless, for all his bluster, the barbarian King gave orders that the courier should be housed well and suffer no indignities. As Laurentius turned to go, hot with wrath, the monarch caught sight of the little cage on his back, and gave a derisive snort.

"And even thou carriest sacred birds around with thee!" he jeered. "I have often heard of the Romans with their ravens and other auguries, but know thou, in Dacia they will avail thee not a whit."

However, he was superstitious enough not to harm the bird, or give any orders concerning it.

All that night Laurentius lay anxiously in his tent, chafing at the delay and wondering what treachery was afoot—for he was sure Decebalus meditated mischief. He would not meet Trajan openly if stealth would serve. The next morning when the prisoner's meal was brought to him, he was enlightened. There were three rough fellows in his guard, and they talked freely together, not knowing that he could understand them. But Laurentius had traveled all over the empire.

He knew or could guess the drift of many tongues. That was one reason why the Emperor employed him in special service. Now as these three men jabbered together, they were highly amused over something. Bit by bit Laurentius, with straining ears, pieced it together.

Decebalus was going to mass his tribesmen for a surprise attack upon the Romans; but to gain time he was going forward with a small force to meet Trajan and invite him out to a parley. There Trajan would be assassinated, whether by dagger or poison, Laurentius could not make out.

The three men sat outside his tent while he ate his meal, but instead of eating, he wrote rapidly, casting wary glances meanwhile toward the tent flap. The sun was just rising, and as it came over the rim of a hill, the guards were startled to see a hand thrust out of the door, holding a pigeon. Up flew the bird, circled around twice, and then bore off in a direction away from the sun. Had Laurentius given a look at the faces of the guards, he must have chuckled. They showed a ludicrous mixture of surprise, awe, and fright. What had happened they did not understand, but it was a bad omen.

Laurentius did indeed smile grimly as he heard their excited jabber about it. But, whatever it portended, the three men resolved that they would not tell the King about the bird's flight. They feared that he might "take it out on them."

Events moved fast after that. Decebalus, for all his braggadocio, was a good general. He sent riders scurrying here, there, and everywhere, and back behind the almost impenetrable forests along the Danube the warriors began to move. Soon an army of fifty thousand men was encamped along the river, but so cunningly was it concealed that none would suspect its presence.

Decebalus himself then rode forward with a small force to meet Trajan; and to avoid any possibility of his plans leaking out, he took Laurentius along with him. Only when within sight of the Roman camp did he turn to Laurentius, and say:

"Ride ahead with one of my men, and inform thy master that Decebalus would speak with him. Say nothing more nor less, for at the first word other than what I have told thee to speak, my man will kill thee."

Laurentius bowed curtly and rode in advance as bidden, an armed guard by his side. He did not even see his master, but when stopped by the first sentry, said in a loud voice: "Announce unto Cæsar that Decebalus is here and would speak with him." Then he awaited the approach of Trajan.

Soon the Emperor himself rode forward, this time on horseback, but accompanied by only a small guard. He recognized Laurentius by a glance, but gave no other sign and only bade him ride back with the Dacian and say that Trajan would meet Decebalus on middle ground.

It was a tense moment when the two leaders neared each other, but of the whole company Trajan himself seemed the most unconcerned. As for Decebalus, the bluster assumed in his own camp was all gone. For the moment he was courteous, almost obsequious.

"Why does my lord Cæsar send me such a letter?" he began, after the first idle remarks as to their mutual state of health were passed. "With former Cæsars I worked amicably to keep the peace, but it is more than my private purse can stand. My men must be paid."

Trajan looked about him, with his eagle eye flashing dangerously. He had seen some of the Dacians seeking to approach him, and their hands were hidden under their tunics.

"Prate not to me of peace, O Decebalus!" he said in quiet, but stern tones. "Thou comest talking of peace, when thy hands would drip with blood. Know, then, that I am aware of thy intentions. The gods have found means to warn me, from the skies. Even now, thy men hide weapons intended for my breast. Bid them begone! Even now, thy forces lie in wait on the other side of the river, seeking to pounce upon my troops as they cross. We shall find means to outwit and defeat them."

The Dacian King was thunderstruck. He glared at Laurentius but remembered that the courier had never left his camp. How, then, could Trajan know all this? He must temporize.

"Thou art misinformed, O Cæsar," he began

smoothly. "I would work with thee and not against thee."

"Then if so, it must be at my terms and not thine. Go back to thy armed thousands on the other side of the river, and tell them there is no king but Cæsar. Within three days, if they do not yield, they shall taste Roman steel!"

The Emperor wheeled his horse in token that the parley was at an end, and Decebalus had nought to do but turn likewise. Rage was in his heart, mingled with chagrin at the complete upset of his plot.

The Dacian guard of the King and he who had Laurentius in charge, followed sheepishly after the discomfited monarch, while they who would have slain Trajan melted as if into the air. Laurentius was left standing alone before his Emperor.

Trajan seized the moment to question his trusty courier as to the country and what he had observed regarding the condition of the troops. Then in a pause of the questioning, he laughed heartily, and clapped his hand on the young man's shoulder, more as a father than a mighty lord.

" 'Twas a good trick thou didst play upon them, O Laurentius! Thy carrier pigeon arrived in camp two hours after sun-up, with thy letter fast to his leg. Never say the pigeon is not a bird of good omen!"

The story of Trajan's later campaign against the Dacians is written upon the pages of sober history.

Long and bitter was the warfare, and the issue often in doubt. Before peace was declared and the haughty Decebalus had sued for mercy, the Danube ran red with blood. Thousands of men perished in mad fighting where no quarter was asked or granted. After one sanguinary battle, so many men lay wounded on the field that there was not lint enough to dress their wounds. The Emperor tore his own clothes off his back to make bandages for them.

Two years, indeed, went by in this struggle, while Trajan risked his throne itself. But when he marched back down the Roman road with colors flying, the people came out to meet him and hail him with words of affection as well as of loyalty.

"My son," said the Emperor one day to Laurentius, "dost remember the spot where I first met Decebalus, after thy pigeon had warned me of his treachery? That, methinks, would be a good spot to build a bridge across the stream. We have used bridges of boats, but if I am to cement the eastern part of my empire, Pannonia and Dacia, and keep the barbarians in check, I must build a bridge of stone. Summon me my engineer, Apollodorus, for I would confer with him about it."

A few months later, the scowling barbarians along the Danube saw Roman workmen and slaves putting to work this idea of Trajan, until in time it stood in proud reality—a splendid bridge, one of the marvels of its age, which spanned the river for many centuries.

There were twenty massive piers each sixty feet thick and one hundred and fifty feet high. Upon these rested the graceful arches supporting the continuation of the Roman road.

On a day the Emperor Trajan himself dedicated this great structure. At the head of his cohorts he drove his chariot on the smooth pavement high above the turbulent waters of the Danube. As was his custom, he held the reins of his prancing steeds in his own hands, but by his side stood a bronzed veteran who, though still young, looked as though he had weathered many an adventure. It was Laurentius, whom the kind-hearted Emperor honored by making him his aide, on this auspicious occasion.

"A goodly piece of work that Apollodorus has done for us, Laurentius!"

"A wonderful work, O Cæsar, which will be but another monument to your greatness."

"Greatness, forsooth! But it will serve to keep these rascally barbarians in check. On roads such as this our armies can march with safety and speed—and our couriers fairly fly—but not so swiftly as once thy carrier pigeon flew through the air—eh, my Laurentius!"

Chapter VI

WHEN CHARLES MARTEL SMOTE THE SARACENS

How Roland the Faithful carried the appeal for help from his liege lord of Aquitaine to Paris and how the Mohammedans were defeated at Tours and Europe saved for Christendom.

(Time: 732)

EUDON, Count of Aquitaine, was at his wits' end. Up from the south over the Pyrenees was pouring a mighty horde of Saracens and other followers of Mohammed—so many that they threatened to overrun all Europe, as they had already overrun the choicest parts of Asia and Africa.

The time was the year 732, only a century after the death of Mohammed himself, but so rapidly had his teachings spread that already Christendom was shaken to its very foundations. Many feared that the teachings of Christ would vanish entirely from the world, and be supplanted by the Koran.

This was not the first time that Eudon of Aquitaine had faced the Moslem hosts. He had met them on the field of battle ten years before, and had won a brilliant

victory over them, so that they fled in confusion back into Spain, and his own land, southern France as we know it to-day, had rest from the invaders. But now again they were swarming up like locusts that would sweep the land clean before them, and would not be denied. So greatly did they outnumber his army that, after a few feeble skirmishes, he had withdrawn to his walled city on the banks of the Garonne, and here he was besieged.

The city was in desperate plight. As far as eye could see to the east stretched out the invading army—hundreds of thousands, it seemed, counting their retainers and followers. For the host had come up bringing all their goods and chattels with them. They liked this land and proposed to stay. Count Eudon looked searchingly over the plain below him, from the top of the great stone tower which stood at one corner of his castle. Then he beckoned to his body servant who stood near him.

"Come hither, Roland, and tell me what thou seest," he said. "Was ever man more like rat in trap than this? Why, an army of black ants could not cover the land more completely!"

"Aye, they be many, my lord," said his servant, a young man of about five and twenty, whose blond hair and blue eyes proclaimed him more Gaul than Frank. "They be many, but there mayhap may yet be a way to circumvent them."

"What sayest thou?" broke in his lord impatiently.

"My war counselors have tried vainly to solve this problem, so why talkest thus?" But for all that, the Count looked closely at his young servant. In times past he had found him both resourceful and cunning.

"My lord, there is Charles of Paris, who is more powerful than the King himself. Belike you could summon his aid."

"Gramercy, we have already talked of that, but it is idle talk. Beshrew thee, we could not get word to Charles because of all this scum of the earth"—he waved his hand in a wide circle at the foe—"and if Charles did perchance succor us, he would annex us to his land of Neustria."

"Better be annexed by a Christian prince than fall before an infidel," replied Roland tersely. He had long since found favor with the Count by reason of his direct speech.

"Yet—how get word through to Charles?" murmured Eudon, more as though speaking to himself.

"We shall find a way, my lord," replied Roland evenly, and would say no more at the time. The Count again eyed him keenly but did not press him. He knew that his man was already working out some scheme in that quick, active brain of his.

Events moved swiftly in the next few days. The Saracen host, not content with merely laying siege to the city, began to make preparations for active assault. Their general, Abd-er-Rahman, was one of the ablest leaders since Mohammed. He had been appointed gov-

ernor of Spain, when that land had been overcome, and he had ruled wisely and well. Not only had he built up his army into a high state of efficiency, but he had set up a just government, reforming many existing abuses and protecting private property—a thing that was rare indeed in those days, in any land. It was in the feudal times when in no country of Europe was there any strong central government, and robber barons set up their own strongholds and preyed right and left upon the people. The only protection afforded the farming class and small merchants was to ally themselves with some stronger prince if possible. They became his villeins, or serfs, in this case a state only once removed from slavery.

Roland's father had sought the protection of the Count of Aquitaine, and had sworn to be "his man." He had knelt before him and placed his two hands between those of the Count, as he swore fealty. He was thereafter a serf, and could not hold property, or even marry, without the consent of his lord. And, what was more, his family were likewise serfs. Roland had been born into this state. Thus dearly had they bought protection.

Abd-er-Rahman, on his part, had become the idol of his troops. They smarted for revenge for their defeat of ten years before, at the hands of Count Eudon, and eagerly followed their general across the Pyrenees, urged on also by lust for plunder and desire to drive out the Christians. There were Berber cavalrymen, Arabs,

Moors, and even Syrians, who had followed the fighting troops from Asia across Egypt and along the entire southern border of the Mediterranean until they had poured across it and seized Spain. Not content with that, they now planned to take all Europe. The poet Southey thus describes them:

"A countless multitude;
Syrian, Moor, Saracen, Greek renegade,
Persian, and Copt, and Tartar, in one bond
Of erring faith conjoined—strong in the youth
And heat of zeal—a dreadful brotherhood."

So confident were they of victory, that they brought their household goods with them, and, as they captured a Gascon town, they promptly moved in and occupied it. The luckless inhabitants who were not slain or did not escape were sold into slavery.

"Nor were the chiefs
Of victory less assured, by long success
Elate, and proud of that o'erwhelming strength
Which, surely they believed, as it had rolled
Thus far unchecked, would roll victorious on,
Till, like the Orient, the subjected West
Should bow in reverence at Mohammed's name."

Abd-er-Rahman wished to make short work of Aquitaine so that he could press on up to the north. He had visions of the rich cities of Poitiers, Tours, and then Paris falling into his hands. He was greedy for conquest. So now he gave orders to bring up all his

siege weapons—huge battering rams to drive holes in the walls; great slings to hurl stones of half a ton weight; fire grenades borrowed from the Greeks; scaling ladders; and many more. It soon became apparent that it was only a question of time, and a very short time at best, when the city would be stormed and its inhabitants put to fire and sword.

Then came Roland before his master, the Count, and said without preamble: "My lord asked me for ways and means to get word to Charles of Paris. I have found such a way."

"Say on," commanded his lord.

"In times more peaceful I have visited at a vineyard a few leagues to the north, a secluded spot off the main highway. This vineyard is tilled by a peasant and his wife—and their daughter Fanchette. I have only awaited a more favorable season to tell you about them."

"Chiefly about the daughter?" asked the Count, with a smile. "Say on, man, for time is fleeting."

"To-night there is no moon and I will go as I have gone before—asking your lordship's pardon—by climbing down a vine on the turret overhanging the river. I will then drop into the stream and swim across, make my way to the vineyard and thence to Paris."

"Truly a devoted swain!" commented the Count dryly; but it was not in his heart to reprove his henchman for the escapade, when it now seemed to open up a way.

"My lord, say the word and I will go. I can easily swim the river; the Moslem guards are few on that side; and once at the vineyard, Fanchette will provide me with a horse. In two days I shall be in Paris."

"Go!" commanded the Count. "Tell my brother Charles of Paris that our need is sore—and not our need alone, but all the north country as well. We must stop these infidels or give up our homes to them forever. Tell him I shall defend the banks of the Garonne as long as possible, and if defeated will try to lead the remnant of my men toward Tours. Give him this ring to show him thou art my messenger."

He drew a signet ring from his finger as he spoke and handed it to Roland. The act, simple in itself, touched his servant deeply, for never had Roland seen the ring off the Count's finger. He bent on one knee as he took the ring and kissed it.

"I shall defend it with my life, if need were," he said.

Count Eudon had not written a letter to Charles, for the good and sufficient reason that he could not write; nor could Charles read. Learning was at such a low ebb during these times which we now call the Dark Ages, that there were no such things as schools, and even the nobles and princes could neither read nor write. The only lamps of learning which stayed dimly alight were in the monasteries here and there, where the monks read and wrote in Latin. And so there was no letter writing even between crowned heads; only the

word of mouth. It is hard for us of to-day to realize that for centuries the common people of Europe had no books, no papers, no letters, no arts, no sciences, and almost no laws; but such was the case.

That night Roland bade his master farewell and climbed out of a narrow turret window full sixty feet above the muddy waters of the Garonne. Clutching a sturdy vine in an angle of the wall, he lowered himself carefully down the stones until within a few feet of the water. Then he dropped in so quietly that there was scarcely a splash, and swam toward the opposite bank. Crawling up under a stunted willow, he peered about him warily. The measured step of a sentry was heard, but it was so dark that he could not see the man, and he rightly judged that his watch that night would be perfunctory. After the Moor had gone by for some paces, he crept noiselessly up the bank, struck into a thicket that he knew, and despite the darkness went ahead confidently and quickly.

With the break of dawn he had left the enemy's outpost far behind him. He turned more boldly down an unfrequented road, and at sunrise came to a cottage. A comely girl with black hair and flashing black eyes was seated on a three-legged stool busily milking a cow. She glanced up with a startled exclamation as a shadow fell across the yard, then changed it to a cry of joy: "Roland!"

"Yes, my Fanchette—Roland—and, moreover, woefully hungry!"

"What art thou doing here? Thou art covered with mud. Oh, my Roland, is anything wrong?"

"Well, for one thing, that old Garonne was terribly muddy last night, and for another, I'm tired. I've run all the way. Give me a draught of that fresh milk, and I shall tell thee all about it, my precious one."

"I shall do better than that; I shall give thee some of last night's milk with plenty of cream; likewise a slice of bread with butter. Then tell me what brings thee here."

She was as good as her word, and while he ate he told her of the parlous situation in which the Count found himself, and his own haste to reach Paris.

"I must borrow one of thy father's two horses, my own," he ended. "It is urgent; the need is great." Then at her look of fear he added reassuringly: "The Moors will not find thee here, my sweet; they will be pressing on up towards Tours and Paris."

"But what if they should conquer Charles as well?"

"Then God help us all! But they must not, they shall not win. Charles must stop them!"

"Amen," said Fanchette, as she clung for a moment to her lover. Then realizing the need for haste and without even summoning her father, she brought one of the horses from the stable and helped Roland saddle it. A hurried farewell, and he was galloping up the lane which led at length to the main road and so to Paris.

The man whom he was hastening to see was not

the king of the country—at least, not in name—but he had kingly power. Charles was styled Mayor of the Palace, but this position had become so important that the kings of the Merovingian line had degenerated into mere puppets. Their very names are forgotten to-day. It was the Mayor of the Palace who commanded the army and issued other orders. Charles, like his father before him, was every inch a king, and to him all the people looked in any crisis.

He had already heard reports of the threatened Saracen invasion, but so swiftly had the enemy moved that he was still unaware of the imminence of the peril. Peasants had come fleeing in with wild and impossible tales which he did not credit. Consequently, when at sundown—the second one after the events already related—he was told that a dirty looking peasant wished to give him tidings of the Moors, he at first refused to see him. But in a moment his chamberlain came back bearing a ring. A glance told him that it was the signet of the Count of Aquitaine.

"Admit him," commanded Charles.

Roland appeared, looking not at all presentable for even those rough and ready days. His clothes still bore some of the mud of the Garonne, his hair was unkempt; even his face was dirty.

"Thou bearest the Count's ring, sirrah," began Charles sternly. "What tidings?—Speak and to the point!"

But if the all-powerful Mayor expected the mes-

CRAWLING UP UNDER A STUNTED WILLOW, HE PEERED ABOUT HIM WARILY IN THE DARKNESS.

senger to cringe as did others, he was mistaken. Roland's blue eyes looked at him frankly, and his speech was good, albeit with the soft slur of the South.

"The Count my master is sore beleaguered, my lord," he began; "I have ridden night and day without sleep or rest to give you his message. The Saracens and their allies have come up from the south like the sands of the sea. They have seized all the towns and walled cities below the Garonne, and only the army of Aquitaine now stands between them and Paris itself."

Charles at once perceived that he was dealing with a man of no ordinary intelligence, so laying aside his brusqueness, he began asking him questions. Roland ended by giving him the most detailed account of the invasion that he had yet received, and it was certainly not reassuring. At the close of the interview, Charles handed back to Roland the Count's ring, and bade his chamberlain see that the messenger had food and rest.

"I shall consult with thee further in the morning," he ended.

Charles was as good as his word, but Roland found that the Mayor had not spent the night in idleness. Already he had sent out couriers to the north, the west, and the east, to summon his allies and every feudal chief to fight the common foe. He did not entreat; he commanded. They were to report for duty under penalty of having their castles confiscated—if not by the Saracen, by Charles himself—he told them grimly.

Charles was then lord *de facto,* as the lawyers say, of nearly all the land which is now Northern France, Belgium, and Germany. The former was called Neustria; the latter Austrasia. Only Aquitaine at the south kept its own prince, and Aquitaine was having troubles of its own. If he drove off the Moor, Charles shrewdly calculated that he could claim all the land as far south as the Pyrenees; but he realized in the same breath that it was an open question whether he could hold on to his own land at the north, in the face of this tremendously powerful foe. He must summon all the available forces of Western Europe, and they must fight as they never fought before.

Charles was too big a general to disdain any aid, so when he again summoned Roland, he talked with him openly of his plans, as to an equal, and asked still other questions concerning Count Eudon's plight.

"If he cannot hold out, then what?" he asked.

"We have considered that," replied Roland. "We have provided boats in case of forced retreat, and my lord's last plan was to make a stiff sortie at the front to cover this retreat at the rear where the castle abuts on the river. Thus some of the army, in any event, can make its escape, and it will then endeavor to march north towards Tours."

"Well said!" commented the Mayor. "Tours shall be our own rallying ground. I shall send still other couriers to my allies to-day, and march out to meet the foe on ground of my own choosing."

He had turned to end the interview when Roland halted him.

"My lord," he began quietly.

"Aye—speak on!"

"Only this—an it please you. Make use of me in any way you see fit—as courier, as armor-bearer. Let me stay near your side in battle and, if God will, carry tidings of the victory to my lord in the south."

Charles' eye kindled. Keen judge of men, he had liked Roland on the instant and could well see why Eudon trusted him.

"It shall be so," he said.

Between the ancient cities of Poitiers and Tours lies a rich farming country—a succession of rolling pasture lands, well watered and fertile. Here sweeps the River Loire with its tributaries, the Cher, the Creuse, the Indre, and other streams. The open grazing country is interspersed here and there by bits of forest and smiling vineyards, for even then, twelve hundred years ago, this section of sunny France was noted for its grapes and wine. It was such a tract that Fanchette's father cultivated, a little farther to the south.

It was on this wide, grassy plain that the allies of France were assembling. Charles was wise in choosing it; for here could be maneuvered the large bodies of cavalry in which his army excelled. This region has been signalized by many battles in the stormy history of France, but none was more bitterly fought than that between the Christian and the Moor. The Battle of

Tours, as it has since been called, ranks as one of the great, decisive encounters of the world.

Just how many men marched behind Abd-er-Rahman that day we do not certainly know. The monks and other early historians give figures running all the way from 100,000 to 300,000 fighting men. Nor do we know how many fell in behind the banner of Charles, Mayor of Paris. Certes, after his couriers went out with their peremptory summons, Tours and the surrounding country speedily became an armed camp. Daily, hourly, they marched and galloped in. Here would be some stout Frankish baron clad in mail and wielding a long spear or sword. Behind him came riding fivescore men-at-arms, every man sitting his horse like a centaur. Or again would come a Gaul, with five hundred crossbowmen back of him. Yonder was a Celt, tall of frame, mighty of sinew, flourishing a broad-ax about his head, and disdaining armor, even a shield.

All were eager for battle. They came of blood-thirsty races and times when fighting was the fashion. And they had heard enough of the followers of Mohammed to know that no quarter would be given, or asked. It was the Crescent against the Cross. Which should hold sway over Europe?

As Charles sat his horse on a low hill and watched his fighting men, on horse and afoot, fill in the lower land toward the Loire, his eyes flashed pride and determination. He sensed the importance of that hour for his country and the whole Christian world; for the

Moslem hosts had swept all before them in Asia and Africa, and had taken Spain. They seemed invincible.

Behind him a few paces, on a horse which was none other than the one belonging to Fanchette's father, sat Roland, unspeakably happy that he was going to be in the thick of it. He carried only a short sword and was protected only by a leather buskin, for he was to act as one of the commander's special aides.

Not long had they to wait, for the enemy was already in sight, marching forward confidently and just as eager for battle. They were of fanatic breed; they fought for the Prophet, for the only true faith of Islam, and if they fell in battle their souls would be transported straight to Paradise.

Such was their belief, and they seemed to welcome death. No sooner had they sighted the waiting army than with shrill yells they dashed forward and literally threw themselves into the fray. The first shock of that battle was terrific and for hours the adversaries struggled, savagely as mad dogs, fighting with every variety of weapon and even with bare hands at throats. No more fierce or determined struggle ever took place in all history.

Let us read the words of an old Arab writer, himself a Moslem, about this memorable battle:

> "Near the River Loire the two great hosts of the two languages and the two creeds were set in array against each other. The hearts of Abd-er-

Rahman, his captains, and his men were filled with wrath and pride, and they were the first to begin the fight. The Moslem horsemen dashed, fierce and frequent, forward against the battalions of the Franks, who resisted manfully, and many fell dead on either side, until the going down of the sun. Night parted the two armies; but in the gray of the morning the Moslems returned to the battle."

The second morning, however, Charles adopted a new stratagem. The night before, Roland had sought him and unfolded the scheme. It was this: Roland knew that in his southern campaign Abd-er-Rahman had accumulated a great deal of spoil. His keen eye had noted that they were lugging this along with them, even into battle. He therefore advised Charles to launch an attack on the rear of the enemy and threaten this spoil. This would create a diversion and perhaps throw the Moors into disorder.

The plan, which Charles adopted, worked like a charm. After the first clash of the front-line men, when the armies were engaging grimly at their task, a cry arose from the rear of the enemy. A regiment of galloping cavalry had circled them from the west and was making straight for their tents. The result is told in the words of the Arabian just quoted:

"Many of the Moslems were fearful for the safety of the spoil which they had stored in their

tents, and a false cry arose in their ranks that some of the enemy were plundering the camp; whereupon several squadrons of the Moslem horsemen rode off to protect their tents. But it seemed as if they fled; and all the host was troubled. And, while Abd-er-Rahman strove to check their tumult, and to lead them back to battle, the warriors of the Franks came around him, and he was pierced through with many spears, so that he died. Then all the host fled before the enemy and many died in the flight. It was a deadly defeat of the Moslems, with the loss of a great leader and good cavalier."

No sooner did Charles see his rival fall than he turned to Roland, who was close behind him, as he had been through all that mighty battle.

"Ride thou to the south to meet the fleeing hosts of Count Eudon of Aquitaine, and tell them the field is ours!"

Then turning to another courier he sent a similar message of victory to the King in Paris.

Roland turned to go, but, as he did so, caught sight of a handsome Arabian steed running riderless away. Its rider had been slain by a shaft from some crossbow. Urging his own mount forward, he caught up with the runaway and grasped his bridle-rein. Then away he rode to the south.

The next afternoon, the simple folk who lived at the vineyard—Fanchette's father and mother—were

amazed to see a rider trotting up the lane on one horse and leading another.

"See, I have brought back your horse," he exclaimed gayly; "and I have yet one of my own!"

While Fanchette and the two old folks gathered about him eagerly, he rapidly told of the total defeat of the Saracen host.

"Praised be God!" they cried fervently.

"Amen, say I. But it was a good fight. Now give me a bite to eat and a sup to drink, and I must on my way to the Count, my master."

That same night, riding on the Arabian steed, Roland reached the Garonne, but only to learn that the Aquitainians were scattered in flight. Many had fallen with the sack of the city, and some said that Count Eudon was among the slain. But, the next day, Roland found an old retainer who told him the Count was in hiding in a village to the west. The weary courier lost no time in riding thither, and what was his joy to find his master again, albeit with but a shattered remnant of his troops. To him he told in much detail of the great victory.

" 'Tis seemly tidings indeed," commented the Count; "nathless, in any event, we of Aquitaine must bow the knee."

It was as he said. When Charles, the victor, met him a few days later, it was to demand the fealty of Aquitaine and Gascony. But his terms in other respects

were not harsh, and the two leaders parted with a better understanding of each other. Roland had acted as go-between for them, before they had met, and had continued to earn the respect and liking of Charles—so much so, indeed, that at a final interview with Eudon he turned to him and said:

"An you could part with this servant of yours, I could find a place for him at the Palace."

"I like not to deny you a boon, my lord," replied Eudon; "but know that, though he was born my serf, I had purposed to give him full liberty—aye, and a little plot of land, that he may wed the maid of his choice."

"What sayest thou?" asked Charles quizzically, amused to see the courier for once ill at ease. "Dost thou prefer the life of a small farmer and a country wench to a career at Court?"

"My lord, no matter where I am, my right arm is always at your beck and call," said Roland.

"Give him his freedom, my brother Eudon, and leave his fate to me," commanded Charles.

"Kneel," said Eudon to his serf.

Roland knelt and the Count took both his hands, pressed them, then released them and placed his own hands on the young man's head.

"Know all men who witness my act that I give back to Roland his serfdom and make him a free man forever," he cried. "I also give to him in fee simple the valley in which lies the vineyard belonging to his fiancée, Fanchette, and her parents. My notary will

draw up the papers, an my lord Charles confirm the grant."

"We shall do more than that," said Charles in his turn. Then to the bewildered aide he said, "Kneel thou to me!"

Roland dutifully bent the knee, and the commander drew his sword and smote his shoulder with the side of the blade.

"Rise, Chevalier Roland, surnamed the Faithful. I make thee a nobleman in thine own right, and confirm thy grant of land," he ended.

Of the rejoicing at the little vineyard when the new-made Chevalier rode back to claim his bride, and the happy days that followed, I shall not try to tell. The danger from the Saracen was ended for all time. He withdrew to the south of the Pyrenees and never again essayed to conquer Europe. With the coming of peace and a stronger government, the farmers and artisans of France took heart again.

As for the mighty Charles, he was also given a surname by popular acclaim—Charles Martel, he came to be called, meaning "Charles the Hammer." He had hammered the hosts of Islam into defeat. And as Charles Martel he has come down to us in history.

When his son Pepin had still further strengthened France and added to it by welding many a little outlying province, he sent word one day to the Pope in Rome; and this is what he said:

"Tell me, good Father, who is King of France—he

who wears the crown, or he who wields the power?"

The astute pontiff lost no time in replying: "He who wields the power."

And soon thereafter Pepin was formally crowned King of France, while the last of the Merovingian puppets went into a monastery.

Pepin's son became the greatest monarch of his time, and of many centuries. Splendid of intellect, wide of vision, powerful in battle, sagacious in peace, he welded together an empire which took in well-nigh the whole of Europe. His name was Charlemagne. But the foundations of Charlemagne's proud empire were laid that day on the battlefield of Tours, when his grandfather, Charles Martel—the Hammer—drove back the Saracens—and when Roland the Faithful carried news of that magnificent victory!

Chapter VII

HOW KING RICHARD WAS FOUND

The story of a faithful page and a favorite minstrel who wandered over Europe seeking Richard the Lion Hearted, and how, when they found him, they sped with the tidings to his faithful subjects.

(Time: 1194)

THROUGH a winding road of the Tyrolese Alps a little band of men might have been seen riding, one Autumn day over seven hundred years ago. The scene in the mountain passes was not very different from that which would greet the traveler to-day —a wild and rugged land of high peaks, clear lakes, narrow valleys, and occasional winding streams. Nor were the hamlets which they saw from time to time of strange aspect. But here and yonder frowning towers guarded the hills, and every larger town had its ramparts, behind which it watched jealously the approach of every stranger; for these were feudal times when there was little law or order in the land, and might made right.

This company of travelers, however, did not seem

warlike. There were only a score of them, clad in mail of knights or garbed as pilgrims. Not all were mounted and the horses they had were of poor strain. Their garments also seemed the worse for wear, and an air of dejection might have been noted despite their alert and warlike bearing. Riding next to the leader was a man of powerful frame, who yet had a luxuriant beard and the rough attire of a pilgrim. This beard and mustache were slightly darker than his hair, which was a thick shock of curling yellow tresses. His eyes were blue and sparkling, denoting a Saxon strain, his forehead high, his nose and mouth well formed. He carried himself proudly for all his pilgrim garb, and it was noted that the others paid him subtle deference.

"My lord," said the leader of the band, with whom he had been conversing in a low tone, "I doubt me if your disguise will hold, as we ride through Austria. But in any event we shall have to secure safe conduct through these dukedoms. What say you?"

The man addressed reined in his horse at a bend in the narrow road and pointed. A frowning castle lay across their path not ten miles distant.

"That, an I mistake not, is the fortress of Goritz," he said. "It is held by Count Meinhard, and although he is a relative of Conrad who bears me no love, and is a henchman of Duke Leopold, he himself has professed friendship for me in times past. Go thou with half of our men and tell him that Hugh the Merchant, returning from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, desires safe

conduct through his realm. If he desires a pledge, give him this."

The supposed merchant thereupon drew a ruby ring from his finger and handed it to the other.

"It shall be done, my lord," said he.

A hasty division of forces was made, leaving less than ten on either side, and the leader rode forward toward the castle. It required nearly two hours over the uneven country to reach the other height, and when the warder met them in front of the closed and heavily barred gate, which was further protected by a moat and drawbridge, the leader stated his name and purpose frankly.

"I am Sir Baldwin de Bethune," he said. "I would speak with thy master, Count Meinhard, in respect to a safe conduct."

The warder eyed him and his men narrowly and bade them tarry for a space. Summoning a man-at-arms he repeated the message for the Count. The man disappeared but returned in a few minutes, saying that his master, the Count, would see them. In a big, gloomy room with walls showing the same rough-hewn stone of the outer side, the Count met them—a burly Teuton clad in a rich yet light coat-of-mail. His face, however, was pleasant enough.

"My lord," said Sir Baldwin, coming directly to the point, "we be a band of knights and pilgrims, footsore and weary, for we have been in the last Crusade to rescue the Holy Land from the infidel. We have had

many adventures with which I will not tax your patience. All we crave is permission to go in peace through your domain."

"Sit ye down," said Meinhard, and waved to a serving man to bring and pour a flagon of beer. "My ear is always attuned to hear of adventures of knightly men. Whence come you? How goes the Crusade?"

"Oh, my lord, 'tis a melancholy tale at best. The infidel is still in possession of Jerusalem, and despite the great deeds of Richard of the Lion Heart, of England, I fear it will remain so. His name is feared from the highest to the lowest; some look upon him as a demi-god, so mighty was he in battle. Even the knightly Saladin, who opposed him, respects his prowess. But Richard's allies of France and Austria fell away from him, and he could not win through alone. 'Tis said that on a day when his men were on a height whence could be seen the Holy City in the distance, he covered his eyes and would not look, saying if he could not win his Lord's City, he was not worthy to gaze upon it."

"And you—were you with him?" asked the Count, again giving him a keen look.

"I was," returned the knight, with a mixture of modesty and pride. "Great were the deeds of prowess of the Christian knights, often against heavy odds, but Richard's arm was the mightiest of all. Yet he sailed away from Acre, a beaten and disappointed man. The last thing he said as he stood on board ship and watched the shore recede in the distance was: 'Most Holy Land,

I commend thee to the care of the Almighty! May He grant me life to return and deliver thee from the yoke of the infidel!' "

"A most pious wish," was his host's only comment. "But what of Richard?"

"His ship suffered from both storm and pirates. He finally made shore, so I am told, on the coast of Italy near Venice. Our vessels were parted in the storm."

"And how many be they in your company, say you?"

"The half of my men stand before you; the other half remain a few miles back—mostly down-at-the-heels men who have been buffeted by Fate, as you see us. One man, a trader of some means in England, called Hugh the Merchant, sends you this ring and begs the boon of safe conduct."

So saying, he handed to the Count the ruby. The latter gave only one glance at it, then exclaimed:

"Your master is no merchant; such rings are worn only by royalty. He is Richard of England and none other. But since he is willing to honor me with his gifts, he may come to me in peace."

One of Baldwin's men was posted back with this intelligence, and when King Richard—for it was indeed he—came riding up, the Count received him with all honors and gave him of the best of his table and wine cellar. Late they conversed on the events of the past Crusade and parted for the night with every appearance of friendliness.

Next morning, however, when Richard would resume his way, his host made demur.

"Why not tarry awhile?" he asked. "I should like to hear more of your prowess in the Holy Land."

"It is but a sad subject with me," replied the King. "And moreover I must hasten on to England. I fear me that things have been at sixes and sevens in my realm. I thank you for your food and shelter, but give me leave to depart."

"It shall be so," said the Count smoothly; "but only on one condition. I must keep part of your men as hostages for a space."

Richard's brow darkened. He was an impetuous man whose tongue was his worst enemy. Seeing him about to speak, the faithful Baldwin of Bethune quickly interposed:

" 'Tis well, my lord," he said. "I will stay with a few of my men, and do you ride on."

And so it was arranged, albeit to the King's deep disquietude. He liked it not and was the more confirmed in his doubts when one of his attendants, a youth still under the age of manhood, drew near to him with a whispered message, as they rode on north beyond Goritz.

The lad was well grown for his age and had hair as yellow as Richard's own, and eyes quite as blue. He might have been a son of the King, so much did he resemble him. Yet there was no blood tie. He served his master as both page and squire, hoping thus to at-

tain knighthood, as was the custom of those days of chivalry. His name was Kenneth, and so faithful had he been, that Richard had come to trust him as he did none other.

"Sire," said Kenneth, "I like it not. Last night, after the lights were out and we were supposed to be asleep, two men bearing torches rode away from the castle, and on the very route that we are now treading."

The King's brow puckered in a frown. "Methinks there is mischief afoot," he agreed. "It would be like my comrade, Meinhard, to greet me with a smile, and then send word ahead to mine enemy, Leopold, of my coming."

"What, then, shall we do?" asked the page anxiously.

His master thought deeply a moment.

"We must outwit them. At the next castle which confronts us—Freisach—I shall send the rest of my men forward to parley. If they are held, thou and I must adopt a still deeper disguise and escape into these surrounding forests."

It was a desperate plan that he was proposing, but the page nodded in silence. Whither his master went he would go, and without question.

Their forebodings proved to be only too well founded. Richard sent the rest of his men forward to reconnoiter; meanwhile he and Kenneth concealed themselves in a dense thicket overlooking the road. An hour or more passed by and the men did not re-

turn. But instead, the galloping of a larger body of horse was heard, and up dashed a company of Austrians, looking anything but peaceable. When they found no trace of the King, loud were their expressions of anger. They made a perfunctory search and a few of the men rode back toward Goritz, to try to overhaul the fugitives. The rest turned and rode back, swearing loudly.

"How my cousin Leopold loves me!" Richard muttered.

The next three or four days were like a nightmare to the boy, as he recalled them in later years. They had no food supplies, and dared not show themselves at any hamlet or farm, lest their presence be reported. One evening they found a stray goat, which they milked, and at other times subsisted on late fruits and berries. Meanwhile they kept to the woods, sleeping out at night, with only a low fire for warmth and protection against wolves and other savage beasts, and taking turns at keeping guard. They were still heading north toward Vienna. Finally, worn out with hunger and fatigue, they came to a village called Eedburg, only a few miles from the city, and resolved to seek shelter at the inn.

While Richard kept to his chamber, Kenneth went out to make some much needed purchases. At the first shop he entered he met with difficulty. His dress aroused suspicion, and he tendered in payment some gold bezants, a Turkish coin. He was taken before a

magistrate and interrogated. Whence came he? What was he doing here?

Kenneth replied that his master was a rich merchant now lying sick at the inn. He had been trading in the Orient, but had suffered shipwreck on his return voyage. The page's frank bearing and cultured speech impressed the magistrate, who released him, at the same time advising one of his guards privately to keep an eye on him. This gesture was not lost on the keen-eyed page, who hastened back to the tavern and urged his master to take flight again. But Richard was really too ill to move. The forest had been a more deadly foe to him than the Saracen. His worn-out frame demanded a few days' rest.

Not finding some raiment that his master very much needed in the village, Kenneth went the next day to Vienna. He did not know that he was followed by the guard from the village, but such was the case. In the market-place at Vienna he again attracted attention by his strange speech and dress. In particular he had imprudently thrust an embroidered hunting glove into his belt. It had been given him by the King and he treasured it so highly that he was afraid to leave it at the inn, lest some one should steal it. The glove was so fine that it immediately proclaimed its owner to be of high rank.

Suddenly, while trying to buy some goods, Kenneth felt his arms roughly seized and pinioned behind him. He attempted to wrest himself away, but found him-

self surrounded by armed men, while the grinning villager greeted him.

"Not so fast, my pretty bird!" he said. "We'll go before the city judge this time, and see what he says."

Followed by a curious rabble, they marched to the city hall, Kenneth's heart sinking within him. But it was not of himself that he was thinking. What would become of his master?

Trials in those rough and ready days were crude affairs. The judge contented himself with asking but few questions; then if the prisoner did not tell all, or gave the slightest appearance of holding back anything, he was tortured. The thumbscrew was a favorite instrument, where the victim was pulled up off the floor and held suspended by his thumbs, which were cruelly pinched. The rack for stretching the body, and redhot irons for branding, were other favorite methods.

It was this form of trial to which poor Kenneth was put that day, a trial which is on record in more than one sober page of history. After hours of agony the boy became unconscious. Time after time water was dashed into his face to revive him, and the question was repeated: "Who is thy master?" At last he murmured brokenly: "He is Richard, King of England!"

The next day at the inn the sleeping Richard was aroused to find armed men standing over him.

"Hail, King of England!" they exclaimed mockingly. "Thou art dressed like a pilgrim, but thy face betrays thee."

Weak as he was, Richard sprang up and grasped his sword.

"Hands off, menials!" he challenged. "I shall surrender to none save your master."

"Ha, say you so?" asked a familiar voice, and the King found his arch enemy, Duke Leopold of Austria, confronting him. They had quarreled bitterly at the taking of Acre, and Leopold had ever since awaited his revenge. Now he openly gloated over his rival. But Richard, like a lion at bay, only kept silence.

Meanwhile, what of Kenneth, the page? He had been suffered to depart after the King was seized, but had lain sick of a fever for some days, brought on by his torture, but increased tenfold by the thought that he had betrayed his King. He thought he would go mad at times, but his sanity was maintained by the one oft-recurring thought: "I must get back to England and summon aid!"

As soon as he was able to travel, he started out on foot. His youth and the humble dress of an apprentice which he now took aroused no suspicion, for there were many journeymen and apprentices who thus went from door to door. He posed as a tinker, a mender of metalware. It was weeks, nevertheless, before he made his way to Calais and so to England.

As he crossed the Channel he had but one thought: "I must find Blondel!"

Blondel de Nesle, his cousin, had been the King's favorite minstrel. It was the fashion in those days

for a court to boast of its minstrels and troubadours, and the King himself was wont to strum a harp and compose ballads on occasion. As for Blondel, he became famed in every court of Europe for his songs. But of late he had felt little like singing. His royal master had disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him up, and none in England knew where he was or if he were still alive—none, that is, except one man and his chosen henchmen. That man was Prince John, the faithless brother of Richard, who was only too glad to keep Richard out of England and thus seize the throne for himself.

For John had leagued with King Philippe of France, in common with Duke Leopold, to keep Richard a prisoner, and never, indeed, in his whole life had the Lion Heart more need of faithful friends. But two there were who now counter-plotted and planned by might and main to aid him. These two were Kenneth and Blondel.

Blondel was a young man only a year or two older than his cousin. He was slighter of stature and his figure was unimpressive. He had a slight stoop in his shoulders from bending over the harp, which was a small stringed instrument carried in one hand and thrummed with the other. The only striking feature about him was his eyes, which seemed lit up with lambent flame when he sang. Some said his whole face then shone like an angel's. His dress was modest, the only ornament being a gold chain around his neck, and

a solid gold key, with which he tuned his harp. It was a gift from the King, and Blondel valued it above all other things.

Kenneth found him without difficulty in London, for Blondel was in a sense a public character, much as an actor would be to-day. After their eager interchange of greetings, Kenneth went with him to a private room in a tavern, and there poured out his heart.

Blondel did not reproach him for his share in the King's disaster. His practical mind was already seeking a way out.

"Thou knowest not where they have confined him?" he asked.

"No, but 'tis somewhere in Germany. I heard reports before I left that country, how that Leopold had given him into the custody of the German Emperor, Henry, and that he was immured in a castle in that land and closely guarded. None knows his whereabouts."

"Aye, and his precious brother John will take good care that he stays there," said Blondel shrewdly. "But come, we have work to do—thou and I! Go thou to the two Queens, his mother and his bride, and tell them in secret what thou hast told me. Meanwhile I must devise a way for discovering where they have hidden our liege lord."

Kenneth found the two royal ladies in great distress. Berengaria, the young wife of the King, had been in the Holy Land with him during the Crusade, but had

taken another ship for home. While in Rome she had seen, to her horror, a jeweled baldric of Richard's exposed for sale. She could get no clew to its history, and had feared that her husband was dead. Great was her joy to learn through the page that he still lived.

Eleanor, the Queen Mother, was no less relieved. She began to plan immediate steps for her elder son's rescue.

"I shall write to the Pope and ask him to demand Richard's release at the hands of the German Emperor," she declared.

"Madam, a boon," said Kenneth. "Let me carry your missive. I shall go as on winged feet."

"Thou shalt go," answered Queen Eleanor. And within the day she wrote to the Holy Father an impassioned plea, ending with these words:

> "Restore to me my son, O man of God, if thou art indeed a man of God, and not a man of blood. If thou dost remain lukewarm, the Most High may require his blood of thy hands."

Before Kenneth left England on this mission, he had a farewell interview with Blondel and the two compared notes.

"What plan hast thou devised for discovering the King's hiding place?" asked the page.

For answer the minstrel took up his harp, strummed a few opening chords, and then began to sing a ballad:

" 'Twas near the fair city of Benevent,
When the sun was setting on bough and bent,
And knights were preparing in bower and tent,
On the eve of the Baptist's tournament;
When in Lincoln green a stripling gent,
Well seeming a page by a princess sent,
Wander'd the camp and, still as he went,
Enquired for the Englishman, Thomas à Kent."

Blondel had a rich mellow voice, a high baritone, and when let out to full strength it could be heard a long distance away. But now instead of being pleased with the melody, Kenneth was vexed.

"Have done with thy foolery!" he cried. "I ask thee to rescue the King, and thou singest ballads!"

Blondel laughed thereat and clapped him on the shoulder.

"That is a part of my plan," he confided. "Know, then, that the ballad I have been singing is one that is well known to the King. I purpose to stroll throughout the length and breadth of Germany, singing the song beneath every tower. Mayhap the King will hear me and will give me some signal in reply."

Kenneth's fine face beamed. "I ask pardon for my stupidity," he exclaimed. "Thou hast hit upon the very thing!"

Across the English Channel went the two cousins together, but soon thereafter proceeded their different paths. Kenneth made his way through France without difficulty and finally reached Rome, where he laid the Queen's letter before the Pope's secretary.

The wanderings of Blondel are a part of history—a singularly romantic history—for he wandered up and down the land of Germany, singing his songs to whomever might heed. But always he lingered longest when in the neighborhood of some towering castle.

On a day he paused beneath the lonely walls of Tierenstein, and, as he looked up at the gloomy turrets above him, with their narrow slits for windows, he shuddered at the thought that mayhap his master might be imprisoned here. Nathless he took up his faithful harp and sang again the oft-repeated lines:

> " 'Twas near the fair city of Benevent,
> When the sun was setting on bough and bent,"

And so, on through to the line where he

> "Wander'd the camp and, still as he went,
> Enquired for the Englishman, Thomas à Kent."

He paused a moment before taking up the second stanza, when—hark! To his ear came, from a window high up on the tower, a voice taking up the ballad from where he had left off. The voice could be that of Richard alone! Overjoyed, the troubadour looked up. There from that slit-like window a hand was extended and a white scarf waved—only for a moment and then was gone. It showed the customary caution of the King.

Blondel answered the signal by singing a few lines of another song—one that he and the King had worked

upon in former days—and then lost no time in setting his face toward England.

And when he told his story, the two Queens and the party still loyal to them and the rightful King moved heaven and earth to effect his release; and Kenneth kept the roads hot between London and Rome, until Pope Celestine was prevailed upon to act. Richard of the Lion Heart was released, after weary months of imprisonment, although John, his brother, had privately offered the German Emperor twenty thousand marks for every month that the royal captive was held. A heavy ransom was exacted upon Richard's release, but this time the Pope himself spoke, ordering a return of the money.

Thereupon, Henry of Germany wrote this letter to his ally, Philippe of France, under date of February 28, 1194:

> "Take care of thyself! The devil is unchained, but I could not help it."

The letter was hastily forwarded to Prince John, in England, who soon found to his sorrow that the warning was only too true.

Among all the King's subjects who crowded the wharf on the day of Richard's return and shouted themselves hoarse, none was more joyous than two who stood a little to one side, silent through their very emotions. They were the King's minstrel and his page. They did not press forward to welcome him, but fol-

lowed his coach afoot in the throng to the palace. In the throne room, after the first press of congratulations, Richard's searching eye sought them out.

"Come hither!" he called to them gayly.

Both went quickly forward, though one went with a sense of dread. Not yet had Kenneth's conscience been able to absolve him for telling the King's name under torture, although nobly had he striven to atone his error.

"Of all the faithful henchmen in my realm," said King Richard in a loud voice, "there is none more worthy of my love than the two who stand before me."

Blondel's eyes gleamed like two coals of fire; but Kenneth only hung his head in shame.

"Sire," he murmured in a low tone, "single me not out for praise, for I did betray you!"

"Not so, in good sooth," contradicted the King. "I know the whole tale, for it was told me by one of the guards. And I forget not our days of wandering through the German forests, nor of thy loyalty since. Kneel!" he commanded.

Kenneth knelt before his sovereign, and Richard rose and tapped him on the shoulder with the flat of his sword.

"Rise, Sir Kenneth of Eedburg!" he cried. "Thou art henceforth a knight in the private household of thy King.

"And as for thee, Blondel, my knight of song—nothing that I might say, and no office that I might

confer, would add to thy laurels. Thou art, and shall ever be, the King's own minstrel. But"—he added quizzically and in a lower tone—"that last ballad thou sangest under the castle wall was a bit off key. I shall have to rehearse it again with thee at our leisure!"

Chapter VIII

A FAMILY OF POSTMEN WHO SERVED KINGS

How a descendant of this famous family proved his mettle by carrying the Queen's diamonds from Amsterdam to Paris in the face of an ambuscade and how all Europe adopted his postal systems.

(Time: 1500)

"UNCLE FRANCIS, when will you send me out on a route?"

It was not the first time that a boy not yet out of his teens had made this request, and the white-haired man before him eyed him keenly before replying. What he saw was a curly-haired stripling, with dark locks worn long after the fashion of the day, whose long arms and legs, not yet filled out, still gave promise of the sturdier muscles to come.

"Johann, you know not what you ask. The life of my riders is a hard one. When I send them out on a journey, I spare not; it concerns me not whether they live or die, so long as my letters go through. Do you realize that?"

"Yes, Uncle Francis."

"Well, I might spare you all this hardship. I need clerks here in my office, as well as in other towns, to receive and sort the mail. Would you not rather have that work?"

"No, Uncle Francis; I want to ride."

"But, listen to this," the older man replied, taking down a volume from a shelf near by; "this is what Garzonus says—an Italian writer who is talking about their riders. Just listen:

> " 'Our messengers have to undergo great hardships at the hands of banditti, robbers, ruffians, murderers, and by reason of floods, broken bridges, storms, rain, mud, heat, cold, snow, wind. . . . In times of war and pestilence our messengers experience great difficulties, inasmuch as they are prevented from proceeding on their journey, being stopped everywhere, the letters and money are taken from them, they get beaten and suffer from many other similar misfortunes.'

"How's that?" the reader ended, looking up. "He is talking about Italy, but our riders have gone all through that."

"I know it, Uncle Francis, but it deters me not. And surely, after all the traditions of our house, you do not want me to be a bench-warmer?"

"Spoken like a true Von Taxis!" exclaimed the other. "But there is another side to it. Your father and I have both told you something of our past history.

How as early as the year 1300—two hundred years ago—one of our ancestors organized the Bergamascan Couriers, in Italy. They it was, of whom Garzonus wrote. But despite all these hardships and dangers, the service set up by my ancestor, Omodeo Tasso, flourished and in time spread to other lands. Our family name has been called Tasso in Italy; Tassis in France; and Taxis in Germany. We became well known all over Europe and have served kings. For instance, Roger de Tour de Tassis established a courier service across Tyrol and Styria, some fifty years ago. So successful was he that the Emperor Frederick asked him to come to Austria, where he was made Chief Master of the Huntsmen, but his real job was to set up relay post stations all over the empire. The Emperor changed his name to Thurn and Taxis. He was my father and your grandfather.

"After Frederick died and Maximilian came to the throne of the Holy Roman Empire, your father Johannes became his Chief Postmaster. By that time our posts had become so well established that most folks thought they were a part of the Government itself. But not so. Our riders wear our family livery and are paid by our house. They serve us alone. But so loyal and trustworthy are they, that the crowned heads of all Europe look to us to transmit their messages."

Francis von Taxis, the speaker, was but stating the simple truth. His modesty forbade him to state—what his nephew already knew—that he was the most famous of all that remarkable family. Philip I, King of Spain

and the Netherlands, had taken a great fancy to him, and had appointed him "Captain and Master of Our Posts." This was in the year 1500, only a short time before our story begins. Francis had begun to run courier lines from Ghent and Brussels in many directions, and had managed them so well that, in 1505, Philip signed a new contract with him and agreed to pay him an annual salary of 12,000 livres—a large sum in those days. For this, Francis maintained a mounted courier service between the Netherlands and Spain; and also to Maximilian's court, in Vienna. His fast riders made the journey from Brussels to Paris in two days; two days more brought them to Lyons; and in fifteen days all told they reached Granada. What is more, they kept this schedule, month in and month out, winter or summer.

All this young Johann knew, and it made him all the more eager to enter the service for himself. He had been completing his education at Brussels, where his uncle had headquarters, and as he watched the couriers gallop in and out—a well conditioned and soldierly looking outfit, mounted on the finest horses, their spurs and bridle trappings gleaming like silver, their curved post horns equally burnished—it seemed to him that this was "the life" indeed. His whole soul revolted from the idea of being shut up in an office, "warming a stool," as he expressed it.

Something of what was going on in his mind reached his uncle, for as the latter ended his talk about the

family history, he reached over and grasped the boy firmly but kindly by the shoulder.

"So you want to be one of my riders, eh? Well, I like your spirit, at any rate. Your father entrusted you to my care, but I know that he wants you to grow up in the business. Perhaps a few weeks or months in the saddle would be of great help to you later—unless some bandit killed you off!"

"I'll take that chance, Uncle Francis," said Johann, his eyes shining. "When shall I begin, and what route will you give me?"

"Not so fast! I'll think it over and let you know in a day or two."

With that Johann had to be content. It was three days before his uncle spoke of it again, and meanwhile the boy had dreamed of it at night—of mad rides and fights with bandits and other thrilling things—but had not dared to bring the subject up, of himself. Then at last Francis said:

"I have an important commission for Paris. It may be fraught with danger. Will you undertake it?"

The eager way in which the boy leaned forward, with parted lips, answered the question. The man smiled, and looked around to be sure they were alone, then continued in a low voice:

"The French Queen has been having a tiara made, by one of our skilled lapidaries in Brussels. It is ready for delivery, but I have reason to believe that the fact is known. It is worth a king's ransom, and if a band

of thieves set their hearts upon it, they would stop at nothing, even murder, to seize it. To send it by one of my regular messengers is to invite disaster. But you have been regarded as only a schoolboy, and could probably go unmolested. Still, I like not to jeopardize your life for a bauble."

"There will be no risk, or very slight. Let me go!" urged the lad.

His uncle hesitated and pondered the matter; then a shrewd look came into his eyes, and he bent forward and spoke still lower.

"I have thought of a scheme, which may throw wool into the eyes of any possible thieves. I shall ask the lapidary to display the gems in his window for a few days. 'The Diamonds of the Queen of France'—what a rare sign for him! But those that he will show will be imitation—paste. Meanwhile, do you set forth quietly with a bundle of books on your shoulder, and none will gainsay you."

"A great adventure," gloated the boy. "When may I start?"

"By to-morrow morn, I hope. But meanwhile, not a word to any one of your projected trip."

Johann was an expert horseman; he had begun riding almost as early as walking. So expert was he, that he could ride with his body entirely concealed on one side of his horse, holding on only by the mane and one heel thrown over the horse's back. He could stand erect at a brisk canter, and spring into the saddle from the

ground. He had one favorite pony, Nicodemus, a coal-black, spirited animal which yet obeyed him at a word. He planned to ride him all the way to Paris, resting overnight at the farmhouse of an old friend of his uncle's, rather than at the relay station, as he did not want to excite attention.

When Nicodemus was brought around to the office, bridled and saddled, Johann was disappointed. Instead of having his pet saddle, a rather worn and shabby one rested on the pony's back. Johann, however, was too shrewd to comment aloud. He went to his uncle's private office for his parting instructions, and while there spoke of the shabby saddle.

"I know all about it, my boy," replied his uncle—then bent over and whispered a few sentences earnestly into his ear.

Johann looked puzzled at first, then brightened. "I see what you mean. That old saddle is good enough," he agreed.

The first day's ride of the new courier passed quietly and pleasantly. Southward he dashed across the Belgian frontier into northern France, traversing the same soil that was to be so bitterly fought over in the World War, four centuries later. Now it lay peaceful and smiling in the sun—bits of farm land, a château here and there, and once or twice a glimpse of a lordly castle set up on a hill. Save for occasional bands of robbers, the land was untroubled; and to-day it looked the picture of contentment. Vineyards, pastures, wheat

fields, herds of cattle, flocks of sheep—these were part of the panorama which flitted before his eyes, as Nicodemus galloped on. And his own heart was singing for joy. At last he was in the saddle for the great house of Thurn and Taxis, and he was riding for the Queen! Oh, it was good to be alive!

It was not his purpose to tire out his faithful little beast, so at noon he stopped at an inn, where he saw to it that the animal had good attention, and where, furthermore, he could keep an eye on the stable, lest some one tamper with the steed. Indeed, he himself ate out of doors under the shade of a willow tree.

After an hour's rest he remounted and rode steadily all afternoon, reaching at sundown the home of his uncle's friend. The farmer had been apprised of his coming, by a courier of a day or two before, and welcomed him like a father. He set him down to a bounteous meal, and then let him seek an early bed; for it was Johann's plan to start again with dawn. But before he turned in for the night, he went out to the stable to look again at Nicodemus, and tuck the old saddle away in a safe place.

The second day, however, brought a different story. For one thing, a drizzle had set in and the road became slippery. Going down grade he had to be watchful lest the pony's hoofs should slip out from under him. He had also to cross one or two bogs of uncertain depth. By the middle of the day he was tired, hungry, and muddy. He stopped to rest his mount in a little

"I HAVE AN IMPORTANT MISSION TO PARIS, FRAUGHT WITH DANGER. WILL YOU UNDERTAKE IT?"

meadow alongside a murky stream, and let the pony graze while he ate an apple and a bun which he carried for just such an emergency lunch. The rain had almost ceased and he was congratulating himself that he would have better going in the afternoon, when he heard hoofbeats on the road behind him. It was too late to run, as the river lay before him, and he would only invite pursuit—but quick as a flash he bent over the pony and unloosed its saddlegirth, leaving the saddle apparently undisturbed. He did not have time to do more, as the men he had heard were upon him.

They were a villainous looking lot—six of the hardest specimens he had ever seen. One had an ugly scar across his right cheek, another had lost three fingers, and all looked as though they had not had a shave or bath in a year.

Dismounting quickly they surrounded Johann and his steed.

"Curse me!" cried one, who appeared to be the leader, "this is not the courier fellow. This is only a schoolboy. Does your mother know you are out, sonny?"

He grabbed Johann by the shoulders and shook him until his teeth chattered, while the other fellows roared with delight. Had he been knocked senseless, it would have been all the funnier to them.

"Speak up, you!" growled the leader. "What are *you* doing here? Have you seen the courier for Paris pass by?"

"No-no," stammered Johann, pretending to be frightened. "I haven't seen any one. I'm only going to Paris to the college. I stayed all night, last night, with Père Antoine, back by the red mill, but in the rain to-day I guess I lost my way."

"A likely yarn," spoke up another. "We'd better search him. We don't want to take any chances of anybody slipping by with them jewels."

"Hold your tongue," said the leader. "Didn't Sondry say that he saw the jewels in Brussels with his own eyes, two days agone?"

"Maybe so," persisted the other. "But this young rooster ought to be good pickings, anyhow. We might as well pluck him, now that we've got him. And that pony's undersize, but we could sell it for a good sum. Even the saddle's worth keeping."

"Oddsboddikins, Raoul is right!" growled the others, and a general movement was made in Johann's direction.

Then they began a thorough search, starting with his cap, which they turned inside out. His coat came next, a sort of tunic of soft wool. As it was unlined, it was easily inspected. Next off came his shoes and hose, but the disappointed robbers found nothing except a few coins. Lastly, off came his corduroy trousers and the boy stood bare and shivering, but for a thin shift.

While they were looking over his effects, suddenly there was a commotion and a loud oath from the men.

They had left a little open space between their captive and his pony. In two jumps he had cleared this, and in another he was on the pony's back, urging him into the stream. The demoralized robbers sprang for their guns and horses, but Johann had the start of them. He was almost across the river before one of the men fired. The fugitive swung far over to one side, and the bullet missed him, for the animal shielded him entirely.

Then a shout of derision mingled with the curses of the band. In swerving, Johann's saddle was turning also; and soon, with a dull splash, it fell into the river near the farther shore. It seemed a miracle that the rider did not go with it, but by hook and crook he stuck on while his mount scrambled up the farther bank and took the road at a gallop.

"Oddsbud!" cried one. "Are we going to let that young jackanapes get away?"

"Marry, why not?" said another. "He hasn't anything of value beside that horse. We've got all his clothes, and he hasn't even got a saddle now!" And again they guffawed loudly.

The leader scowled. "I'd chase him all the way to the gates of Paris," he said, "but for the fact we might miss the regular courier when he rides by. And I've got a certain tip that the Queen's jewels are going to be sent to her this week."

Thus they argued and debated, while Johann let no grass grow beneath his feet. League after league was

clicked off, until the welcome sight of a relay station came to his eyes. The men on duty stared as they saw this vision of a young, almost naked rider covered with mud and foam, riding bareback. But the station-keeper was an old and trusted employee, whom Johann had met in times past. He quickly took the shivering lad inside, gave him some hot broth and makeshift garments. To him the boy told his tale, and they quietly laid their plans.

At early dawn, the next day, a small band of determined looking men rode back over the way that Johann had come, and he was with them. As they neared the stream where he had met his misadventure, they rode quietly and warily, to see if the ruffians were still there. But they had gone, and there were no traces of a campfire.

Posting a man on the road ahead as a sentry, they rode down into the river and began poking about with long sticks. After a few minutes' search Johann exclaimed, "Here it is!"—and jumping off his horse he hauled up the old saddle, dripping with mud and water, but evidently none the worse for its bath.

The old station-keeper chuckled, and as they rode back toward Paris, he and Johann went side by side, with the recovered saddle on the pommel of the boy's horse.

"So you thought that was the best way to do it—to slip the saddle, eh?" the man said, for the tenth time.

"Yes. I was afraid they would hit me or the horse.

In that case, the saddle was safest down there in the river."

"I reckon you're right," said the man admiringly; "but you sure have a shrewd head on your young shoulders!"

Johann flushed and grew uncomfortable at the man's praise. "Oh, it wasn't much of a trick," he said.

The station keeper only chuckled. "Going to carry that old saddle straight through?" he asked.

"Gramercy—yes! It has brought me luck so far."

The next day at noon the warders at the gates of Paris admitted a young rider, whose horse was presentable enough, but whose garments were nondescript and ill-fitting, and whose saddle was a wreck. Nevertheless, he demanded stoutly to be led before the Queen, and as all couriers with such messages were given free passage, they dared not detain him, for all his youth and poor appearance.

The Queen with her ladies-in-waiting was taking the air in the palace gardens, when a page came to her, announcing the arrival of the courier.

"Send him to me," she commanded.

Presently the page returned, and behind him came Johann, his face reddening as he contrasted his bedraggled appearance with the fresh daintiness of the young girls who looked at him merrily and did not try to hide their amusement.

At first the Queen was annoyed at his appearance. "You have a message for me?" she demanded crisply.

"Yes, your Majesty. I come from Brussels."

"Ah—then perhaps you have heard aught of my tiara?"

"I have, your Majesty, and to me has been accorded the honor of bringing it to you."

The ladies looked surprised at this courtly speech. They saw that this was not the boor they had at first thought.

"Where is it?" asked the Queen, all impatience.

The courier bowed.

"Come, Nicodemus!" said he; and again the girls gasped in surprise at the beauty of the black pony, which came forward obediently and stopped by his master.

"Oh, what a darling!" murmured one.

Johann drew his sheath knife from his belt and slit open the old saddle. A concealed pocket was revealed, and from that he drew a small packet which he presented with a low bow to the Queen. She made haste to open it, while her attendants crowded around unreproved. Soon a chorus of "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" and "How lovely!" burst from the throng. The Queen herself was as pleased as a child, and held the beautiful bauble off at arm's length to admire it.

Johann still lingered, uncertain what his next move should be, according to court etiquette. Her Majesty saw his uneasiness and asked graciously:

"Had you any trouble in bringing the jewels through to me?"

"Only a little, your Majesty," stammered Johann, acutely embarrassed now.

"Come," commanded the Queen, scenting a story and willing to be entertained; "you shall tell me and my ladies something of your adventures on the way."

And willy-nilly they got the whole story out of him. They found it vastly amusing as they conjured up the scene which he described with faltering tongue—as forsooth that battery of feminine eyes was most disconcerting. But they secretly admired, too, his resourcefulness, and the modesty with which he sought to make light of his exploit.

"Your name, young man?" demanded the Queen, at last. "I should have asked you this before."

"Johann von Taxis, Madame,—at your service."

"Indeed?" exclaimed the Queen, arching her brows. "Are you related to the great Francis von Taxis, or de Tassis, as we say here in France?"

"He is my uncle, Madame."

"Then you are kin to one of the greatest men in all Europe—a man whose friendship is sought by crowned heads. And you yourself, if I mistake not, will go far. Here, take this in token of the friendship of the Queen of France!"

She drew from her finger a ring and handed it to him. He bent on one knee and kissed first the ring and then the tip of her finger, and she did not withdraw it, but smiled down upon him. The muddy messenger was now her favored knight.

In days to come, the Queen's prophecy proved true. Johann proved a worthy scion of a famous stock. His uncle was mightily pleased when he heard the result of this first mission. He gave him more and more responsibility, and at his death, a few years later, the great postal organization now reaching into every country in Europe passed into Johann's hands. But before the death of Francis von Taxis, the Emperor Maximilian conferred upon him a knighthood and the Order of the Golden Spur, which was one of the most coveted decorations in Christendom.

Johann was made a count, and the family, which had other active members, was given a coat-of-arms by the Emperor. Its armorial bearings contained a golden horn of the coiled type like those used by post-riders to signal their approach to a station.

So devoted was Johann to the Emperor's service that when Maximilian died and the crown of the Holy Roman Empire passed to Charles V, Johann himself rode the route from Vienna to Brussels, bearing the tidings of the new dynasty.

As for Francis, his uncle, a famous old tapestry is still preserved, which contains the only portrait of the founder of the Imperial Posts. Here in three scenes he appears as a noble-looking man of shaven face and white hair, his hat held in one hand, and a letter bearing a seal in the other.

Not alone did he serve kings and nobles. As soon as his service grew firmly established—so firmly that even

the robbers gave it proper respect—he demanded the privilege of taking private mail and even passengers. This was grudgingly conceded after a time, the Emperor stipulating that such service was never to interfere with the carrying of the royal dispatches. This fact deserves special mention, as here for the first time was instituted a postal service for the man in the street.

Johann carried out the traditions of the famous house worthily. Although he grew wealthy and powerful, he remained faithful to the ideals which his uncle had instilled into him. And one of his most treasured possessions was the ring given him by the Queen. In after years when business took him to Paris, he sought again that royal lady.

"How is my knight of the muddy saddle?" she asked, extending her hand.

Again he kissed it respectfully as he bowed low.

"Your Majesty," he replied, "it may interest you to know that I still preserve that saddle among my most treasured possessions. One other thing, however, is far dearer." He drew a small case from his pocket and opened it and drew out her ring. "It always goes with me, your Majesty. It is my talisman."

"I am proud indeed to have you keep it," she replied, smiling happily. "Howbeit, your true talisman is not my ring; it is *loyalty!*"

Chapter IX

BEN FRANKLIN, POSTMASTER

How Franklin aided the ill-fated General Braddock in his campaign against the French and Indians, and established the Colonial postal service across the Alleghanies.

(Time: 1755)

IN the year 1755 two riders might have been seen going southward from Philadelphia, along the post road; but both the town and the road were far different from what they are to-day, nearly two hundred years later. The Quaker City was a substantial little place of only a few thousand inhabitants, although many of the houses were brick. William Penn had seen to that, and his heirs were still in control of the place. As for the roads, the less said about them the better. In wet weather they were seas of mud, and they wandered uncertainly up hill and down dale. Such a thing as grading was unknown, and long detours had to be made around farms. But the post roads, or those followed by the mail-carriers, did have markers in the shape of mile posts, to keep the traveler from getting lost. One of the men who now rode along

the southern route had had the mile posts put in.

He was a stocky man with large head, high forehead, and frank, open countenance. His genial smile made friends at sight, and he had the still better faculty of holding his friends. Men spoke of him as the most popular person in all the Colonies. Ben Franklin was his name, but many called him "Poor Richard," by reason of a famous Almanac which he published.

Franklin had come to Philadelphia as a poor boy—so poor that, as he walked into town, he made his breakfast off a big roll of bread, carrying another one under his arm. A young girl standing in a doorway was vastly amused at this. That had been a good many years ago, and the boy had grown up into a successful man—and married the girl who had laughed at him. He had become a printer and publisher, and then postmaster of Philadelphia.

While this position did not bring much of a salary, it was an honor and it gave Poor Richard another cause for gratification. The former postmaster, William Bradford, published a newspaper, the *Mercury,* which was a rival of Franklin's paper, the *Gazette.* Bradford unfairly forbade his post-riders to carry the *Gazette,* or any other paper save his own *Mercury.* When Franklin got the office he opened the post to all newspapers.

For sixteen years Franklin had charge of the city mails, in addition to other duties—then he was given a still higher office, that of Postmaster-General of the

Colonies, which were still under the Crown. Another man, William Hunter of Virginia, held this office jointly with him, and they were to get three hundred pounds a year each—if they could earn it. But nobody ever had made any money out of it.

As Postmaster of the Colonies Franklin had troubles aplenty. It was not alone the condition of the roads; the safety of his riders gave him much concern. The Indians were getting more and more troublesome—egged on by the French, who were building a chain of forts from Canada south along the Alleghanies. The southernmost of these forts was called Du Quesne ("Du Kane"—now Pittsburgh) and it was of this that the two riders were talking, on the morning when our story opens.

"What chance has General Braddock, Father, in capturing Fort Du Quesne?"

The older man shook his head.

" 'Tis a mighty doubtful prospect, William," he replied. "But you cannot get the British officer to see it. He thinks that all he has to do is to march his redcoats across, and the French and their red allies will scamper. But Colonel George Washington, of Virginia, thinks different."

"Moving a regular army through the mountains is a pretty big job in itself," remarked the young man sagely.

"Right you are, son," said the other; "and that is one reason why I'm making this trip down to Fred-

ericktown—to see if we can help the General. But they say he's terribly headstrong!"

Benjamin Franklin had no reason to change his estimate when he later rode into the British camp in Maryland, and conferred with the commander. He was self-important, self-sufficient. He had brought over two regiments of regulars from England, and they made a fine show as they deployed through their maneuvers on the broad parade ground in front of headquarters.

"Nonsense!" he said to Franklin, when the latter ventured to caution him against the risk of marching through hostile country without advance scouts. "The redskins may give the raw militia some trouble, but it is impossible for them to stand against seasoned troops!"

"But, sir," Franklin ventured to add, "our country is very unsettled. It is hard to move an army, much less protect it from surprise attack. Colonel Washington says—"

"Enough!" returned Braddock, growing red in the face. "I have considered all this, and am prepared for eventualities. We will give the lurking natives a taste of powder and shot!"

The wise Franklin saw that there was nothing to gain by argument. He did, however, give the General much useful information about the condition of the Colonies, and what Pennsylvania in particular could do to aid his expedition. He remained in camp sev-

eral days, and Braddock found himself turning more and more to this canny Postmaster.

One day Franklin found the commander fuming with rage. He had sent a body of men out into the country to buy horses and wagons from the farmers, and they had brought in only twenty-five, many in such poor condition as to be almost worthless.

"Look at them!" he stormed. "Twenty-five, and we need a hundred and fifty. We cannot march across Pennsylvania with such a baggage train. What do the Colonials expect of us, if they give us no better support?"

"It is too bad," said Franklin. "That is a poor showing. Now if you had only landed up at Philadelphia, you would have found every farmer with his own wagon."

The harassed General eagerly laid hold of his words.

"Then you, sir, who are a man of interest there, can probably procure them for us; and I beg you will undertake it."

"What terms do you offer the owners?" asked Franklin.

"Write down the terms you think fair, and I will sign it."

Franklin did so, and returned home with his son, William, to get together the equipment.

Not many days thereafter, the farmers and villagers lying out from Philadelphia were surprised to see, not one, but two post-riders on their route. One was the

regular rider, whose saddle-bags contained the letters and papers which were so eagerly hailed in those days of infrequent news. In some instances the mail for a community was left at the crossroads store to be distributed. In others, the farmer living directly on the route was favored by having his mail delivered at his home; but he had to pay extra for this privilege. In the few years that Franklin had been in charge, many reforms and improvements had been instituted, and for the first time the people were in a fair way to getting their mail regularly and cheaply—that is, if the pesky redskins didn't interfere.

The other rider who now appeared on their route was none other than William Franklin, the Postmaster's son. He exhibited an advertisement which had appeared in his father's paper and read it aloud to various groups gathered at the village stores. Here is what it said, in part:

"APRIL 26, 1755.

"ADVERTISEMENT

"Whereas, 150 wagons, with four horses to each wagon, and 1,500 saddle- or pack-horses, are wanted for the service of his Majesty's forces now about to rendezvous at Will's Creek, and his excellency, General Braddock, having been pleased to empower me to contract for the hire of the same, I hereby give notice that I shall attend for that purpose at Lancaster from this day to next

Wednesday evening, and at York from next Thursday morning till Friday evening, where I shall be ready to agree for wagons and teams, or single horses, on the following terms, viz.:

"1. That there shall be paid for each wagon, with four good horses and a driver, fifteen shillings per diem; and for each able horse with a pack-saddle, or other saddle and furniture, two shillings per diem; and for each able horse without a saddle, eighteen pence per diem.

. . . . . .

"*Note.* My son, William Franklin, is empowered to enter into like contracts with any person in Cumberland County."

We can imagine the buzz of interest and comment this notice excited as it was carried through the country.

"Wants our teams, eh? Well, how do we know that we are going to get our money?"

"That seems like a wild goose chase—going out after skulking varmints with a bunch of regulars!"

"But something has surely got to be done. The French are getting in too close to our back door for comfort."

Young William Franklin patiently explained details and answered many questions.

"You will certainly get your money," he kept repeating. "I know that General Braddock has already advanced several hundred pounds for this purpose, and my father stands ready to make good any deficit."

The last statement carried more weight than any other. They did not know General Braddock, but they did know—and respect—Benjamin Franklin. On the strength of his bond the farmers gave heed to his plea. Soon the wagons began to come in, and the pack- and saddle-horses as well. So fast had the post service worked, that within two weeks the outfits were on their way; and the General was delighted to receive 150 good wagons with their teams, and 259 extra horses.

Franklin was even better than his word. While he was in camp, Colonel Dunbar, who commanded one of the two regiments, told him that he was much concerned over the poor equipment of the lower-grade officers such as captains and lieutenants, whose pay did not allow them to purchase many of the necessities and none of the luxuries for the campaign. The kindly Postmaster listened, but said nothing of his own intentions in the matter. The next day, however, he wrote and sent a letter back by his son William to the Pennsylvania Assembly, warmly recommending the needs of these young officers to their consideration. William himself had had some experience in military life and helped him draw up a list of things that each officer would require.

The Assembly committee approved the recommendation and—as Franklin said later—"used such diligence that, conducted by my son, the stores arrived at the camp as soon as the wagons. They consisted of twenty parcels, each containing:

6 lbs. loaf sugar
6 lbs. good muscavado do.
1 lb. good green tea
1 lb. good bohea do.
6 lbs. good ground coffee
6 lbs. chocolate
½ cwt. best white biscuit
½ lb. pepper
1 qt. best white wine vinegar
1 Gloucester cheese
1 keg, 20 lbs. butter
2 doz. old Madeira wine
2 gallons Jamaica spirits
1 bottle flour of mustard
2 well-cured hams
½ doz. dried tongues
6 lbs. rice
6 lbs. raisins

"These twenty parcels, [Franklin continues] well packed, were placed on as many horses, each parcel with the horse being intended as a present for one officer. They were very thankfully received, and the kindness acknowledged by letters to me from the colonels of both regiments in the most grateful terms. The General, too, was highly satisfied with my conduct in procuring him the wagons, etc., and readily paid my account of disbursements, thanking me repeatedly, and requesting my farther assistance in sending provisions after him. I undertook this also, and was busily employed in it till we heard of his defeat, advancing for the service of my own money upwards of one thousand pounds sterling, of which I sent him an account. It came to his hands, luckily for me, a few days before the battle, and he returned me immediately an order on the paymaster for the round sum of one thousand pounds, leaving the remainder to the next account. I consider this payment as good luck, having never been

able to obtain the remainder, of which more hereafter.

"The General was, I think, a brave man, and might probably have made a figure as a good officer in some European war. But he had too much self-confidence, too high an opinion of the validity of regular troops, and too mean a one of both Americans and Indians. George Croghan, our Indian interpreter, joined him on his march with one hundred of those people, who might have been of great use to his army as guides, scouts, etc., if he had treated them kindly; but he slighted and neglected them, and they gradually left him."

All the world knows the result of Braddock's folly: how he marched straight into an Indian ambush and his prize regiments were cut to pieces almost in the twinkling of an eye; how the young Colonel George Washington and other Colonials tried vainly to rally the disordered regulars and ministered to the dying General in his last moments; and how Braddock died, whispering: "Who would have thought it!"

This disastrous defeat left Franklin himself in a quandary. He had personally given his bond to the farmers for wagons, teams, and other supplies, and his final bills amounted to the staggering sum of twenty thousand pounds, "which to pay would have ruined me."

But Poor Richard was not given time to disentangle his own affairs. He was plunged neck and crop into

the war with the French and Indians, which Braddock's blunder had made ten times more threatening. Calling his son William into his office, he talked things over most earnestly. A map of Pennsylvania and the adjacent colonies lay before him, and upon it were traced thin red lines.

"There you are, William," he said; "there is our task. The Governor sent for me yesterday. He wants me to call out volunteers and go with them as colonel against the enemy. I shall need you as aide. But in the meantime, what about these?"

He followed with his finger the red lines on the map.

"Here are the arteries of our country; they are our post roads along which our news—which is our breath of life—flows. They must be maintained and improved, at all cost. How are we going to do it, and fight Indians, too?"

"We can do it, Father. I know a score of picked men who will keep your routes open despite all the redskins in Christendom!"

"Well spoken! Now see—here's our job. Our western line goes out here to Lancaster, fifty miles or so away, and then another fifty miles to Carlisle. A southern line runs from there to Winchester, and I am just writing Colonel George Washington, who has been put in command of the frontier forces of Virginia, asking him to get his Legislature to maintain the road from Winchester to Carlisle. If they won't do it, why, I reckon we will have to. If you want a thing well

done, do it yourself. But the service has been so poor that riders have come through only once a week, and it has taken three weeks to send a letter from Williamsburg to Boston. We must remedy that, but with the redskins getting more troublesome, it won't be an easy task."

"We will do it, Father!" said William again, his eyes shining.

"That we will; but I wanted to talk it all over with you, so that if anything happened to me out on the frontier, you could carry on.

"Now here's our eastbound route," he continued, one stubby finger on the map. "It goes over here to Burlington, then up to Perth Amboy, and by water to New York. Those sailing vessels are uncertain, but they're the best we can do until some scientist comes along and shows us a better way of propelling vessels. I wish I had time to tackle that problem! Perchance this new force we call electricity might be harnessed. But heigho! a man can live only one life at a time."

"I think sometimes that you live *three* at a time," put in his son admiringly.

"I certainly do manage to keep *busy*," replied the older man, modestly; "but whether or not I accomplish much, stumps me. Now here is this postmaster job; it alone is big enough for any three men. We were talking about the eastbound route, awhile ago. We have been sending out a special mail, in addition to the stages, by horse every Friday morning. By using dili-

gence our riders can reach New York by Saturday night. What happens then? Any mail that is to go beyond is laid over until Monday morning for the next rider. It doesn't make any difference whether it is a message of life or death, or a business transaction involving thousands of pounds; it is laid over. And the stages are worse. In the wintertime they are lucky to get through at all. Of course, you and I know what sort of roads they have to traverse—muddy or dusty trails full of chuck holes, sharp corners, steep grades. Through the forests they have the narrowest of passes, and a single fallen tree blocks them. It requires a week for one of our stages to get through, best schedule time. The newspapers are full of complaints of delays—especially in winter. Look at this—and this."

He laid before his son two New York papers. One contained a notice prominently displayed, reading: "The last storm put our Pennsylvania Post a week behind, and he is not yet com'd in." [1] The other was even more to the point:

> "WHEREAS, the late Severity of the Weather has occasioned an Irregularity of the Stage between this place and Philadelphia; PUBLICK NOTICE is hereby given, That an especial Messenger with the Mail for Philadelphia will be despatched from this Office at Ten of the Clock this Forenoon in order to bring the Stage right again.
>
> "ALEXANDER COLDEN, Post Master."

[1] These quotations are from actual notices.

"Now that's a great thing to say about his Majesty's Mails, isn't it!" Franklin commented, with a twinkle in his eye. "But I must remedy that and make the Post show a profit—something it never yet has done. I must do that with one hand, and fight off redskins with the other!"

"I will help you, Father," said William earnestly. "And by this time to-morrow I will have my score of picked riders rounded up for you to look over."

"That is well; for the Governor orders me to proceed to Bethlehem at once. The redskins have already burned the Moravians out at Gnadenhut."

William was as good as his word. On the next day there were tied up before the Philadelphia post office as clean-limbed a bunch of horses as you would want to see. Their riders were just as good to look at—not that they were handsome, according to standards of beauty—but every man Jack of them was a wiry, seasoned veteran who could ride straight, think straight, and shoot straight.

Franklin's words to them were few, but he shook each man by the hand as if he counted on him alone.

"I am depending on you men," he said. "You are the eyes, the ears, the tongues of the Colonies. You will not fail me, I know!"

And they did not. In the months to come they proved their mettle. Ben Halliday was a case in point. Ben had been given, at his own request, the line between Philadelphia and Carlisle. The last fifty miles

THREE SAVAGES APPEARED, PEERING ABOUT THEM TO SEE WHERE THEIR QUARRY HAD VANISHED.

of it was frontier, but he knew it, knew every trail and timber mark. Every Monday morning he set out, and such was his speed that with only a single change of mounts, at Lancaster, he made the trip in two days. Then with a single day's rest he started back again.

One day on a westward trip, while nearing a dense strip of woods, he heard a wild turkey call. To any one else it would merely have contained promise of a good dinner; not so to Ben. He pulled up his horse into a walk and frowned. Presently the call was answered from another thicket. That settled it for him; it meant lurking redskins. How could he outwit them?

Dismounting as though he had dropped something, he pretended to be searching the ground. Then he remounted, turned his horse around, and went slowly along until a bend in the trail hid him from view. Quickening his pace he presently turned into a dense bit of rhododendron, fastened his horse, and tied its nose with a bit of cloth so that it could not whinny. Silent as death he lay there for an hour or more. Then, when he was about to give up his still hunt as a mistake, his trained ear caught the soft pat-pat of moccasins on the trail. Three savages appeared around the curve, walking in single file and peering about them to see where their quarry had vanished. A moment more and the sharp crack of a carbine broke the stillness, followed by the report of a pistol. Ben had fired the two weapons which he carried, and each of them had brought down its man. In a split second thereafter he

sprang from the thicket, hunting knife in hand, and after a fierce struggle with the third warrior, killed him also.

That night when he rode into Carlisle as if nothing had happened, the postmaster, who was also village storekeeper, noticed three small, gory objects hanging to the pommel of Ben's saddle. They were scalps.

"Oh, just some little imped-*i*-ments that got in the way of the mail to-day, that's all!" said Ben.

With the coming of peace from the French and Indian War—a peace that was to be still more rudely disturbed in a very few years by the outbreak of the Revolution—Benjamin Franklin, soldier, statesman, philosopher, publisher, scientist, inventor, and, after a few more things, *postmaster,* began to show a profit for his Colonial service. In the year 1761 he and Hunter amazed the London officials by sending £494, net profit, which was "the first remittance ever made of the kind."

During the next few years the Post Office continued to show a profit, in spite of the fact that Franklin himself spent some years abroad in the interest of the Colonies. In 1769 the sum of £1,859 was the profit for the fiscal year; and the gratified head officers in London recorded that "the posts in America are under the management of persons of acknowledged ability." Five years later it had climbed to £3,000.

Then came the Revolution. The skirmishes at Lex-

ington and Concord were fought, and it was one of Franklin's post-riders—for he was now the *Continental* Postmaster—who disturbed the Sabbath stillness of New York by galloping madly down the old Bowery Road leading from Boston, shouting his news as he came.

Yes, Franklin was still at his job of trying to improve the Post. When the Continental Congress met in 1775, they passed a Post Office Act setting up a line of communication from away up in Falmouth, Maine, down to Savannah, Georgia, with as many cross routes as might be deemed necessary by the Postmaster-General—and he was Benjamin Franklin, who by this time knew more about routes in America than any man living. He was given a salary of £1,000 a year, and earned it.

As Postmaster he had been allowed a franking privilege. That is, if he wanted anything to go post-free, he simply stamped it: "FREE. B. FRANKLIN." This was the legend he employed while he acted for the Crown. But with the dawn of liberty he changed his stamp to read: "B FREE. FRANKLIN"!

Chapter X

WHEN STEAM WAS HARNESSED TO SAILS

How Nat Crane carried a sack of mail to England on the first ocean-going steamship and dumbfounded the wiseacres who said it couldn't be done.

(Time: 1819)

NAT CRANE, red-headed, freckle-faced, jumped down from the big, clumsy, mail coach which had just come lumbering in from Philadelphia and drawn up at the Washington post office in a cloud of dust. The time, a hundred years ago and more, saw a very primitive Washington indeed—scraggly office buildings mingled with taverns and shops on a wide, unpaved, rutty and boggy street which was to be the lordly Pennsylvania Avenue in years to come. The post office itself was a large, sprawly frame structure, with Government offices on the second floor.

"Whew!" said Nat, as he mopped his brow before beginning to hustle down the bags from atop the stage; "some hot day for April."

"Sure is," agreed a postal clerk. "If this keeps up we'll have a red-hot summer."

"Tell you what," continued Nat, "this old stage ride is sure getting monotonous. Wish Mr. Meigs would send me rambling somewhere else. Shucks—I'd go to Timbuctoo, if he'd say the word."

Nat's good-natured grumbling must have been heard by a wishing fairy, for the very next morning, while getting ready for his return trip to Philadelphia, he was summoned into the private office of the Postmaster-General, Return J. Meigs, himself. It was in the first administration of President Monroe and during the "era of good feeling" when politicians of all parties were working together for once to build up a prosperous country, and the Post Office Department had caught the same spirit.

"Good morning, Nat," greeted the official affably. He knew most of his men by name, for the entire Department then would not have totaled more than the postal department in one good-sized city to-day. "My window was open yesterday, and I chanced to overhear you saying something about going to Timbuctoo."

He smiled at the young fellow's embarrassment, for Nat's freckled face had grown the color of a beet, and continued: "Well, I am thinking of sending you a part of the way, anyhow. How would you like to take an ocean voyage?"

"Yes, sir—sure I would, sir!" stammered Nat.

"Your record is as clean as any carrier on my list. For the last year you have not missed a day or been late through your fault. Now I want a dependable man

for a special mission, and I think you would measure up to it. Any family or other reason why you couldn't take a trip of several weeks, perhaps months?"

"No, sir."

"Likely to get seasick?" The Postmaster's eyes twinkled.

"I—I reckon not. Took two or three trips down the Coast."

"Well, this beats any coastwise trip. They have built a steamship for service at Savannah—at least they call it that, although it has sails, too; and they are proposing to make a voyage in it to Liverpool. Between the steam and the sails it ought to get there. You know, Fitch and Fulton have both built steamships that would run, and Fulton is putting on a regular line on the Hudson. But nobody has tried going across to the other side in one. They say, for one thing, that a boat couldn't carry enough fuel for the engine for such a voyage. That is why these chaps down in Savannah are going to have two strings to their bow. I am telling you some of the details so that you can see the task ahead of you; for I am planning to send a sack of mail by that ship—perhaps inaugurate a service, who can say? Do you still want to go?"

Nat's shining eyes answered for him, before he blurted out: "Does a duck want to swim?—Oh, I beg pardon, sir! Indeed I do want to go!"

"Then make yourself ready to start the day after tomorrow," said the Postmaster-General, his manner sud-

denly becoming crisp and business-like. "This steamer, the *Savannah,* leaves shortly for Liverpool, as I have said, and I wish you to go abroad with it. Come in at this time to-morrow for final instructions."

Nat took his leave, his face in a glow, his whole body tingling at the prospect. A steam vessel to England, and with him as the first mail-carrier! What a lark, and how the other boys would envy him his good luck! No more muddy or dusty roads—they were *always* one or the other—and no more burst thoroughbraces for months to come. Nat's grandfather had been a tar, and Nat suddenly found that it was in his blood.

The next day's interview with the head of the Department gave him only a few more facts, but they also were important. He was to go as an official observer of the vessel, to see whether steam navigation was practicable; and while the ship remained on the other side, he was to keep his eyes and ears open, observing the methods used abroad for carrying and handling mail. A simple contract but a large one; however, the Postmaster was a good judge of men and felt confident he had picked the right one to carry through.

The coastwise trip was made without special incident. In those days of poor roads and difficult travel inland, the best means of communication was by water.

A two-masted vessel sailed down the Potomac from Washington, dropping mail at Norfolk. Thence it beat around Cape Hatteras and so south to Charleston

and Savannah. Off the harbor of Charleston, which is guarded by Fort Moultrie and Fort Sumter, a small schooner awaited them, and to it were transferred several sacks of mail for that city and neighboring towns.

Every feature of this trip, however, was of interest to Nat. He got his sea legs after a slight attack of sickness off the Cape. By the time they reached Savannah he was walking with legs wide apart and the rolling gait of a born sailor. He had even learned how to chew tobacco! He aided in the transfer of the Charleston mail at sea as if he had done this sort of thing all his life.

It was only a day's sail beyond, with favoring breezes, to Savannah, which was reached by going through Tybee Sound and up the Savannah River a few miles—a good, landlocked harbor, but sometimes awkward to get out of, in contrary winds, as there was not much room to tack. But the men who had built this new contraption which used steam thought they had an answer for that.

When Nat caught his first sight of it, he was both surprised and disappointed. It did not look very different from the usual packet or sailing ship, except that its foremast and mainmast were widely separated, to make room for the engine and boiler. It was rigged as a ship, but with no sails higher than topgallant sails. There was a third mast set well astern. The chief novelty was, of course, the engine and paddle-wheels. The engine was of one cylinder with a horizontal driv-

ing-rod capable of a six-foot stroke. The paddle-wheels were housed in a circular box on each side amidships, and the paddles—eight in number—were made of wrought iron and so ingeniously contrived that they would close up like a fan. They were also furnished with joints, so that they could be taken off the shaft quickly, in the event of a storm or for any other purpose. Nat found later that this could actually be done in twenty minutes. A smokestack stuck up prominently in the center, from which black smoke poured out.

On each side of the bow the boat flaunted its name proudly—*Savannah.* Nat learned that it had been built by Francis Fickett, of New York, under the direction of its captain, Moses Rogers, who was an associate of Fulton and Stevens, and had helped to run the *Clermont,* Fulton's pioneer boat on the Hudson. Rogers had interested some Savannah business men in the new craft, who had visions of making their city the chief port of America.

The *Savannah* was of 350 tons burden. It carried for fuel both coal and wood—75 tons of coal and 25 of wood. Furthermore, with its ingenious device for unshipping the paddles, they could go back to the winds of heaven, if steam failed. They were wisely not taking any chances. With sail alone they could make nine or ten miles an hour; with steam nobody knew how fast they could go—yet.

The *Savannah* had been launched in 1818—the year

before the time of our story. Now it was getting well along in May of 1819, and by the time Nat's coaster with its mail arrived, preparations were being hastened for a departure.

"Favorable winds—huh!" snorted William Scarborough, one of the owners, proudly. "We'll mark those two words right off the calendar for good! When we get ready to start, we'll *start,* even if there's not a capful of wind!"

We of to-day cannot realize how much gratification lay behind that boast—if he could only make it good. For centuries untold every voyage had been compelled to wait upon the fickle breezes—unless one used galleys or other oared ships of the ancients. But when Columbus came across the ocean with his three tiny ships, they were propelled only by sails, and the same had been true of all other voyagers up to the present. The voyage to Europe was still a matter of weeks, uncertain by many days as to time of arrival. Now if mankind could only harness *steam* to the task, what a tremendous stride forward it would be!

Nat found, indeed, that he was taking part in a national event. President Monroe and some of his cabinet, with other distinguished men, had come to Savannah overland by stage, expressly to see and take part in this departure. There had been great doings in the city for the better part of a week. Scarborough, who was a "merchant prince," had taken the President and his party down the river to Tybee Island, where a large

booth decked in living green had been erected, and a shore dinner was eaten, with much speech-making thereafter.

The gallant little steamer was well fitted for such an excursion of high officials, as its appointments were most luxurious for those days. There were two handsomely furnished main cabins, or saloons—one for men and one for women—richly upholstered with curtains, hangings, imported carpets, and gilt and plush galore. The staterooms, 32 in all, were no less luxurious. The *Savannah* looked, in fact, more like a pleasure yacht than a steam packet.

And yet with all its smartness and luxury, the ship carried no passengers when it sailed abroad. The company advertised for passengers and extolled the comforts of the ship in the language of the best advertising men of to-day—but no tourists showed up. They were evidently skittish about fire or an explosion. Travelers are more venturesome nowadays, whether for airship, submarine, or what have you.

But beside the fear of accident, a great many folks believed that it would never get across the Atlantic—at least by steam. Why, it couldn't carry fuel enough, the wiseacres said; and they pish-tushed the very idea.

But while wiseacres scoffed and doubters stayed ashore, preparations went actively forward for sailing. No great amount of cargo was taken aboard, although they did carry some cotton and rice for ballast.

Nat was lucky. He had a big, elegantly appointed

stateroom all to himself, and as he stowed his lone sack of mail in one corner, he remarked to himself: "Well, we don't weigh much, but just look at all the room we've got. This sure does beat the stage!"

The morning of May 24th dawned clear and bright. It was a gala day in Savannah. Business was practically suspended and every man, woman, and child who could get there crowded along the riverside to see the new marvel. Nothing else had been talked about for days. There were some pessimists who made bets that the ship would not even get out of the harbor by steam alone, but they were so quickly taken up by enthusiasts and boosters that they were silenced for the time being.

There she lay glistening in new paint, her funnel black and imposing. Even the spars had been newly varnished. A smart looking craft she was, despite the ungainly paddle-boxes, which stuck out on each side like huge warts. "Would she run?" The question was on every lip, and there was a general air of uneasiness despite the outer confidence. "She's *got* to run!" the boosters said to themselves.

On board, during the final preparations, Nat helped by keeping out of the way as much as possible. He had been honored, the night before, by being invited to a farewell banquet given to the ship's officers and company by leading citizens. As a representative of the Post Office Department he had been called upon for a toast, but had responded by flushing his rich red, grin-

ning, and saying that *his* job was not speech-making: he only carried the mails and let them speak for themselves; then he had sat down, instantly liked and appreciated by everybody in the room.

Black smoke was pouring out of the funnel amidships as the stokers fired up. Occasional red sparks floated out and threatened the neighboring roofs, but in the excitement of the occasion nobody heeded them. The engineer proudly watched his steam-gauge rise and, when satisfied, nodded to Captain Rogers.

"Cast off forward!" bawled the latter. "Off with the stern ropes!" he yelled a minute later, as the ship began to ease away, aided by poles in lusty hands.

Until clear of the dock the ungainly paddles remained motionless. No sails had been set, as the start if at all was to be by steam alone. Once clear and with her bow pointed downstream, a great clatter was heard on board. The engineer, at a signal from the captain, had opened the throttle. The billowing clouds of black smoke gave way to sharp puffs; a cloud of steam arose; the engine quivered; the paddles turned, churning the water into foam—and she moved!

What a cheer arose from the thousands on shore! Men danced about, clapping each other on the back, throwing their hats in air, shouting themselves hoarse. More than one wiped his eyes unashamed. Look! there she went! the *Savannah—their* boat! Going without a hitch, too! Favoring winds—huh!

Yes, the *Savannah* was actually under way—making

a terrible clatter, it is true, but that was mostly swallowed up by the din ashore. What was more to the point, she was moving twice as fast as the tide, and passing steadily by the other craft in the harbor. Soon she had reached the broader waters of Tybee Sound and then the open sea. The last glimpse of shore by those on board was of waving handkerchiefs and hats, steadily fading away. Many a hat was lost that day in the waters of the Savannah River.

Nat watched the receding shore line with a lump in his throat, but what caused the lump he himself could not have told. It was born of a multitude of conflicting emotions. But, in fine, he felt much as Columbus must have felt on his voyage of discovery. He was helping to make history.

Nat had made himself popular with Captain Rogers at an early stage of the game. "See here, sir," he had said in that straightforward way of his, "I'm not to be a star passenger; I'm only one of the crew. Put me to work anywhere, any time." He knew that on any well-conducted boat nobody loafs. It was all the more so on this hybrid ship which carried both steam and sails.

"All right, my man," answered Rogers. "I'll take you at your word and thank Uncle Sam later. Right now you can help most by learning how to relieve the engineer."

Nat took the hint and at first opportunity had the engineer, Perseverance Smith, teach him the mysteries

of that puffing contraption that made the wheels go. He learned quickly, much to the engineer's delight, and then was shown other things, among them the clever device by which the paddle-wheels could be unshipped in rough seas. It was not long, in fact, before Nat was serving his regular shift and enjoying it. He belonged.

He was not long, too, in discovering that they did not plan to make the entire trip under steam power. The boiler was a glutton for fuel, and they wanted to be sure to have some left to make a triumphant entry on the other side. Besides, in rough seas, the paddles were often jerked out of the water in a crazy way by the listing of the boat, making the engine act still crazier. The whole thing was a huge experiment, and both captain and engineer recognized that fact from the start.

Well out of sight of land a good brisk gale sprang up.

"Man the sails!" bawled Captain Rogers.

Quickly the crew sprang aloft and soon the sheets of canvas rolled out on the yardarms, and under combined wind and steam the *Savannah* sprang forward like a greyhound. No such speed had ever been attained before, by any ship. But the keen eye of the captain noted a danger. Flying sparks from the stack were threatening the sails.

"Bank your fires!" he ordered the engineer; and Perseverance Smith, aided by Nat, obeyed.

As the steam pressure dropped they closed the throttle. The paddles slowed down and stopped, and Nat

WHEN IN SHOUTING DISTANCE, ITS SKIPPER BAWLED THROUGH A TRUMPET: "NEED ANY HELP?"

with two others at the lever folded and raised the dripping blades from the water. Then, with full head of sail, the brig—*not* the steamer—*Savannah* breasted the waves. They had actually changed her from steam to sails in *fifteen minutes!*

This lively scene was reënacted many times on the trip across. The weather as a whole was favorable, and whenever the winds were right, Captain Rogers wisely let old Æolus have his own way. But at any let-up from his vigorous cheeks the sails were furled, the engine fired up, the paddles set, and away they went even faster than before, to the intense satisfaction of the old tars on board who recalled many a weary day when they had sat idly by, watching the limp sails and waiting for Æolus to get on the job. As Coleridge so aptly described it in his "Rime of the Ancient Mariner":

> "Day after day, day after day,
> We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
> As idle as a painted ship
> Upon a painted ocean."

The *Savannah,* forerunner of that countless fleet of the future, was to change all that.

Two amusing incidents occurred during the voyage, and Nat never told about them in later days without laughing heartily. Out in midocean another ship hailed them and then bore down as fast as she could come. When within shouting distance, its skipper bawled through a trumpet: "Need any help?" "No,"

answered Rogers. "Gosh! Thought that you were afire!" yelled the other, and tacked around again.

On the log of the other ship this entry later appeared:

> "Hailed the *Savannah,* but found that she went faster with fire and smoke, than we could with all sails set. We then discovered that the vessel on fire was nothing less than a steamboat crossing the western ocean, laying her course, as we judge, for Europe, a proud monument of Yankee skill!"

The same ludicrous mistake was made when well on the other side, off the coast of Ireland. The British revenue cruiser *Kite* saw the black smoke and gave chase, thinking the ship on fire. The pursuit lasted all day and only ended as they neared the shore. The crestfallen British officer then asked permission to come aboard, and was loud in his praises of the new craft.

It was about this time that Captain Rogers made a discovery which he did not like, and entered in his log-book: "We are running short of cole" [coal]. He must conserve what he had left of it or wood, so that he could make a good entry into Liverpool.

A few days later in that port, a group of weather-beaten shippers and merchants sat in a tavern, discussing that oft-debated problem—the use of steam for ships. The opinion, however, was too unanimous to make a debate of it.

"I tell you, it's arrant nonsense," said one old seaman. "You may be able to harness steam for harbor craft or

light jobs ashore, but you can't do anything with it on the high seas."

"You're right, Jem!" said another, while the rest nodded their heads. They were saying in effect the same thing that the lords of the Admiralty, in London, had been saying for some time. "Can't be done. Can't carry fuel enough. Too unwieldy," were the opinions heard on every side, from naval officers down.

Jem paused to light his pipe, satisfied with the popularity of his opinion, when his keen old eye caught a strange sight to seaward. It was a thin column of black smoke. He looked again and his jaw dropped. Others, catching sight of his expression, looked, too.

"Suffering catfish, what's that?" exclaimed one.

Amid other grunts and calls of incredulity, the vision they looked at steadily took shape. It was a ship at sea, but it had no sails set and yet it was drawing inshore! The black smoke and little jets of white could mean only one thing—*steam!* Some of them had already seen Stephenson's puffing engines on their tracks.

"By the great horn spoon!" ejaculated Jem, when he was finally convinced that his eyes were not deceiving him. "And here I've just been saying it couldn't be done! Blow me for a cross-eyed whale!"

But the others were too busy marveling for themselves to pay any attention to his discomfiture. A few hastened down to the wharf to get lighters and go out to meet the stranger. Some rowed, others hoisted small sails like catboat rigging. They had not gotten out a

mile when the smoke-consuming vessel was upon them; and again their jaws dropped as they watched its revolving paddles. Here was a sight they would talk about in the taverns and on shipboard for years to come.

When well within the harbor, the *Savannah* came to with a flourish. A bell sounded, the engine ceased pulsing and the paddles stopped turning. An anchor was thrown out, and the flag of England was hoisted forward. The Stars and Stripes already fluttered from the stern. The ship had come across in the record-making time of twenty-seven days. Eighty hours of this, by actual count, had been accomplished by steam.

"Give me a deck big enough, and I'll come the whole blamed voyage by steam," said Perseverance to Nat.

The latter grinned and then stuck his head over the gunwale to greet some men in a boat which was pulling alongside.

"Hey, there!" he yelled. "I've got a sack of mail for London, and I want a boat to set me ashore as quick as possible!"

And thus it was that the *Savannah* came in, to set the whole world a-buzzing. True, they had not come the whole way by steam, but they had shown the way. The lone sack of mail that Nat Crane delivered in London, a day or two later, was significant. A new and quicker means of communication was being born.

As for the *Savannah,* she stayed some weeks on the other side, and at every port was visited by throngs. She cruised along the shores of the Baltic, visiting

Copenhagen, Stockholm, and St. Petersburg—and being in turn visited by crowned heads and other officials, before turning her prow homeward. Nat, meanwhile, bore in mind his chief's instructions and observed many things about mail carrying which he later reported to Mr. Meigs.

It was the very last day of November when the home port, Savannah, was again reached. The welcome given the crew was quite as uproarious as their send-off. Some of the citizens felt like jumping into the river and kissing the ungainly vessel as it slowly puffed its way up to the wharf.

Were this a work of fiction, I should tell of the regular service by steam that was at once set up, and how the *Savannah* plied regularly across the Atlantic; but stern facts are otherwise. Some mechanical difficulties had arisen which still remained to be solved. The problem of fuel was still vexatious. And so the promoters reluctantly went back to sails. The paddle wheels and engine were taken off the *Savannah* and she was put on a coastwise route from her home city to New York. Two years later, in November, 1821, she was driven ashore in a gale, off the coast of Long Island, and became a total wreck.

When Nat Crane, now promoted to be inspector of routes, in Washington, heard about it, he felt as if he had lost a near relative.

"Too bad, old girl!" he lamented. "I believe you would be living yet, if you hadn't given up smoking!"

For twenty years or more after the untimely end of the gallant *Savannah,* sails continued to be the only means of propelling ships. Then, while America slept and paid no heed to the lesson which this little ship had taught—and mails continued to require weeks and months for delivery—British subjects made one or two successful attempts, and finally Samuel Cunard, up in Halifax, began to get busy. He formed a British company for the purpose of building a fleet which should ply the Atlantic by steam alone. Within a few years more his dream was realized, and the great Cunard Line was born. His first ship, with a screw propeller, came across, in the summer of 1840, in fourteen and one-half days. Nevertheless, it was an American ship which had shown Samuel Cunard the way; and if American capital had only become interested then and there, our country would not have been so behind on the seas as she was so long.

Let us turn over the pages of history a hundred years more after the voyage of the *Savannah.* In the busy harbor of New York, with steam craft everywhere, a giant liner is slowly making her way up the Bay to dock. She is the *Majestic* of the White Star Line, another British company—more than 50,000 tons, as against the 350 tons of the little *Savannah!*—and this is her "Christmas trip," for she brings in her capacious hold thousands of gifts and messages from friends abroad. Some of these messages have been penned on the other side within less than a week. Not waiting

for her to dock, as minutes are precious in our modern mail service, a flock of Government mail tenders has already held up the big ship off Quarantine. Mail chutes are run out from the vessel's side, and dropped into the waiting tenders. Six of the tenders are being filled at once with a constant stream of bags, the work being personally supervised by an Assistant Postmaster-General, four assistant postmasters, one hundred and twenty-five men from the New York City post office, and sixty of the crew of the *Majestic*. All work like mad to the end that this European mail shall be delivered in the farthest corner of the United States before Christmas. Some of it is hustled over to the flying field in Long Island and sent by air. The planes will be many miles inland before the ship herself docks.

And how much mail was there in the hold of the *Majestic?* Oh, only a little matter of 17,661 bags!

But not one bag out of all that mountain of mail ranked in importance with the lone mail-sack that Nat Crane took by steamship to England, a century before!

Chapter XI

THE SNORT OF THE IRON HORSE

How an industrious and resourceful Yankee mail-carrier of nearly a hundred years ago got through with the post from Washington to Richmond on one of the first railroads built in the country.

(Time: 1842)

THE scene was the deck of a ramshackle Potomac River steamer; the time, to be exact, the year 1842. Two men trod the upper deck and swopped yarns. One was a young Englishman, handsome and smiling, who seemed to take great delight in drawing out his chance companion, a Yankee of about his own age, who talked with a drawl and who seemed to have an inexhaustible fund of anecdotes.

Hosea Higgins—for that was the name of the American—was a lank, sinewy Down-Easterner, who said he hailed originally from Maine, but had been so many other places that he had forgotten whether Maine was a place, or a state of mind. He was a Government mail-carrier, but you would hardly know it by his costume, which was of nondescript variety—top boots, corduroy

trousers, a faded blue coat, and a cap that had seen better days.

"You mail-carriers," said the Englishman, who seemed to have a faculty for asking questions, "do not wear any distinctive uniform, do you?"

"How can we—traveling 'round the way we do?" responded Hosea. "You just follow me with this here mail as far as Richmond, and you'll wonder how we keep any clothes on at all, *I* reckon!"

"Why, a big, husky fellow like you ought not to have any trouble," laughed the other.

"He oughtn't, hey? Well, you see that pile of mail-bags down there on the lower deck? Before we get to Richmond, they will be on a boat, on a wagon, on a stage, and on a railroad! Yes, and in between times we'll be husking 'em around on our shoulders. But come along; you said you wanted to follow the mail route from Washington to Richmond; darn my buttons—you'll see!"

The young Englishman laughed again. It was pleasant to hear him; he seemed to enjoy life—to view it as a huge lark.

"Have you been carrying mail long?" he asked.

"Ever since I was grown—about ten years ago. I like it. It gets into your blood somehow. But I tell you it's no soft snap! You see, over here it's not like on your tight little island of England. There you don't have far to go, and you've got good roads. You have more railroads, too. But here, why it's a thundering

big country—still a lot of it wilderness, with no roads to speak of, and precious few railroads. That's why we have to tote the mail three or four different ways just going as far as Richmond.

"Last year I had some funny experiences. I undertook to lay out a route across the Alleghanies. You see, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad is pushing to the west, but they haven't got across that mountain range yet; and some folks say they're *never* going to lay rails across it. Well, as I was saying, the Railroad Company had a line of track running a few miles out of Baltimore, and they got Peter Cooper, a New York engineer, to build them a locomotive. He did, and it ran; but it was so small that it was called 'Tom Thumb'; some folks called it a 'tea-kettle on a truck.' But it ran fourteen miles in an hour and a quarter on a practice run—yes, sir, and I don't think that's bad, do you? Why, the Company had been so hard up for engines to pull their dinky little cars, that they fixed up a treadmill on a flat-car, with a horse inside. The horse stayed on the job until it took fright at a cow alongside the track, and ran away, or tried to. It wrecked that train pretty thoroughly. Another time they tried to pull a bunch of cars along by sails. Darn my buttons, if they didn't! Yes, sir, they rigged up some leg-o'-mutton sails on top of flat-cars, and waited for the breeze to pull 'em along. But that didn't work, either."

"I should say it wouldn't," said his listener, with another hearty laugh.

Hosea grinned and took a chew of tobacco.

"Wait a minute, stranger. You haven't heard all of that yarn, yet. As I said, Tom Thumb delivered the goods, for all he was so small-like. The engine was hooked up to the driving wheels by means of a leather belt, and how Tom did puff and snort! He seemed to feel his oats.

"Right along the same right of way as the Railroad was a stage-line, and its owners were anything but tickled when they saw this rival threatening to take their business away. And they said it was adding insult to injury for that fool contraption to come snorting along frightening their horses and blowing smoke and cinders in the passengers' faces. So they decided to take Tom Thumb down a peg.

"As I said, awhile ago, the trial run was a great success. The Railroad folks were greatly pleased, and planned to have another trial run, a few days later, and they invited some city officials and other big bugs to have a free ride on the contraption. They also asked Uncle Sam to send along some mail; and I was picked to take it. We started off from Baltimore in grand style. Tom pulled six or eight coaches, which looked a good deal like stages on rails, at a lively rate, and we made Relay, the first stop, in jig time.

"There we saw a stage on the road alongside the track, with four spanking horses, waiting for us. They were headed our direction, and the minute we came in, we saw what they were up to. That stage company

proposed to race us to the next station, and they had picked their best horses for the test. As soon as Tom came puffing up and drew abreast of the stage, the driver whipped up his horses and away they went. My Jemima! how they did tear! I've carried mail on some pretty lively runs, but I never saw horses go to the beat of those!

"At first they forged ahead—and my! how their passengers cheered. But Peter Cooper, who was driving his engine himself, told his fireman to feed in some fat pinewood. Tom spat out a lot of black smoke and cinders, and soon drew up to and passed the galloping horses. Then it was *our* turn to cheer! But we let out our cheers too soon. We began to lose speed, and I noticed a worried look come into Cooper's face. Tom Thumb's belt had become heated and begun to slip, and although he didn't wear any trousers, the results were just as bad. Cooper stopped, jumped out and tried to fix the belt, but before he could get it back in place the race was over and the other fellow had won!"

The Englishman laughed still more heartily at this story and Hosea's droll way of telling it.

"Go on," he said presently. "Tell me some more."

"Well, there isn't much more to tell about *that* story. Tom got fixed up, and soon the Railroad was running on a regular schedule and going farther and farther along the Potomac toward the mountains. But for many a day the Alleghanies will be too much for them.

A canal-boat company has a line out there, right across the mountains—yes, sir; but the way *they* have worked it out is to haul their boats on an inclined track with a cable, on dry land, and send them down on the other side of the mountain. That line is running on regular schedule, and if you are going to Pittsburgh, as you say, you'd better take that."

"Yes, I think I shall try that canal-boat. It sounds interesting," remarked the Englishman.

"Well, I've carried mail over that line, and I've carried it plumb over to Illinois—using canals, stages, horses, railroads when I could get them—any old thing! You see, you will get a line of railroad for maybe forty or fifty miles. Then there won't be anything but prairie, and mighty muddy prairie, at that. Getting the mail across *that* country is no joke! Darn my buttons if it is! But it's carried regular, just the same.

"Why, just a few months ago I was sent out there to see a trial trip of one of the first roads running into Springfield, Illinois, and we had a lively time of it. The Company had just two engines, somewhat bigger than Tom Thumb, but they burned up a stack of wood and drank a lot of water. If anything happened to stop them between stations, as it did more often than not, or the engine ran out of food and drink, then there was trouble. There was nothing for it but for the passengers to pile out and help the crew cut and carry wood or form a bucket line to the nearest creek or well.

WHEN THE ENGINE RAN OUT OF FUEL, THE PASSENGERS PILED OUT TO CUT WOOD AND CARRY WATER.

"I remember one day it was raining little hammer-handles, when we got stuck that way, out on the prairie, and the brakeman stuck his head in at the door and asked for help. The car we were in looked like a big omnibus on rails, and it had two long seats running along the sides. Those seats, or benches, were made of planed wood and slick as all get out, on top. Whenever the train would come to a sudden stop, the passengers slid along with such force that the two or three nearest the end piled down onto the floor.

"There was one tall, loose-jointed chap who was the greatest story-teller I ever saw—a good sight better than *I* am," Hosea hastened to add, as he saw his listener smile quizzically at him. "This fellow kept everybody in stitches. I think from his talk that he was a member of the State Legislature, out in Illinois, and from his own account they spent money like a drunken sailor, in trying to get the railroads out there. He told one yarn about being a passenger on one of their dinky little trains, one stormy night, and just about the time they were getting close to Springfield, the engineer let out a long blast of the whistle just to show off. It blew all the steam out of the boiler, and the passengers had to get out and walk the rest of the way, a mile or two, in the pouring rain.

"He was just finishing telling this yarn, and laughing louder than any one else over it, when the brakeman told us we were stuck. 'It's up to you, Abe, to show how well you can hike in the rain!' said another

fellow, slapping him on the back. 'I reckon it is,' said Abe, good-naturedly; and out he got in the rain and asked the engineer for orders. I'm fair tall myself, but I was half a head shorter than Abe as he stood alongside of me. The engineer gave us both a look and then said: 'You two tall fellows take these here buckets and go down to the creek and pass 'em up to the others, while Jim and me cuts wood.'

" 'That's the ticket,' says Abe, grinning. His good nature made us all take it as a joke, instead of getting sore; and for two hours we fetched water and stoked up wood, until that snorting engine had enough to take it to the next town. As I worked along with the fellow they called Abe, we got to talking and, I tell you, he wasn't anybody's fool. I don't know when I have enjoyed working with a man so much as I did with him. He cracked a lot of jokes, but some of 'em had hard common sense mixed up with the fun. When he learned that I was a Government mail-carrier, he said, 'Put her there,' and stuck out the biggest hand I ever saw on a human being. But then he was built large all the way around. And he went on to say: 'I'm a member of the Illinois Legislature, and we want to do everything we can to help the Government put in good mail service out our way. When we get to Springfield I want you to stop at my house. I have a law office there, and my name's Abe Lincoln.' "

"Did he help you?" asked the Englishman, as Hosea stopped and spat a cud of tobacco into the water.

"He sure did; and I found that everybody around there knew and liked him. But the mail service out that way is a long shot from what it ought to be, and until we get better roads, both of dirt and iron, it will keep on being bad. You mustn't go back to England and poke fun at this country because we are behindhand with such things. Remember, we're *big*, and it takes a sight longer to make a suit of clothes for a whopping man, than it does for his little brother—not that *you* are our little brother by any means except as to *size!*"

The Englishman laughed again at this sally, but must have forgotten the advice. His name was Charles Dickens, and when he went back home, he did hold up to ridicule many things in the new country which, naturally, were much better done in the old. This journey in which he followed the mail route from Washington to Richmond with Hosea Higgins was a huge adventure to him and, we suspect, he wrote it up afterwards with some exaggeration.

The first stage of the trip down the Potomac from Washington was made by steamer. "It was not unlike a child's Noah's Ark in form," says Dickens, "with the machinery on top of the roof." When he went on board, it was riding lazily up and down, and bumping clumsily against the wooden pier, as the ripple of the river trifled with its unwieldy carcass.

The boat got away at early dawn and soon after sunrise was passing Mount Vernon. "The river is wide

and rapid," wrote Dickens; "and its banks are beautiful." Soon after nine o'clock they reached Potomac Creek where, he thought, the oddest part of the journey began. The route lay overland to Fredericksburg, and seven stage-coaches were waiting to take the passengers, the light luggage, and the mail. Hosea Higgins with the help of two negroes put the mail-bags on top of two of the coaches, with the exception of a smaller bag of more valuable letters, which he stowed beneath his legs on the outside box seat, where he himself rode with the black driver.

There were four horses to each coach, and while the passengers and freight were being transferred, there was much confusion. Noisy wheelbarrows rattled down the stone wharf. Drivers were yelling instructions. Passengers were arguing as to which coach they should take. Horses were being harnessed, and trying to bolt at sight of the steamer. Everybody and everything, in short, was trying to make as much noise as possible. As for the coaches, there was little to choose between them. All were big, clumsy contrivances, the bodies being suspended between the axles by leather thongs, in lieu of springs. It was impossible to tell what was their original color, for they were covered with mud from tire to roof, and looked as though they had not been cleaned since first built. There was only one outside passenger to each coach, and he sat on the box alongside of the driver.

The driver of the first coach, where Hosea sat with

the mail, was black as the ace of spades. He was dressed in a coarse pepper-and-salt suit, excessively patched and darned, with gray stockings, enormous shoes guiltless of any blacking, and very short trousers. A low-crowned, broad-brimmed, black hat completed his costume.

"Well, what do you think of our outfit?" asked Hosea of Mr. Dickens, as he eyed him quizzically and took a fresh chew of tobacco.

"Looks interesting," replied the famous writer; "but do you think we can get there?"

"We will if we don't get mired up in some of them bogs along the way. Why, do you know," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "the last time I came along here, we were wondering if we would make it through the worst mudhole, and when we got to it, the driver whipped up his horses and, darn my buttons, if we didn't ride across it like we were on a bridge! The driver was just as puzzled as the rest of us, to understand why we went over so easy, when I happened to look back and saw something move. It was the coach that had been just ahead of us; it had gotten in the hole clear over the top, and while it was struggling out, why, we drove right spang across the top of it—darn my buttons, if we didn't!"

Dickens looked at him reproachfully. "Darn my buttons!" he repeated to himself softly.

"Go ahead!" sang out a voice on the wharf; and the noisy caravan began to get in motion. Hosea and

his black driver got on board the first coach. Dickens occupied the seat of honor on the second. The various drivers cracked their whips; and away they went.

The first half mile lay along the river-bank and part of the time in the water. The road was a sort of bridge made up of loose planks laid across two parallel poles, which tilted up as the wheels rolled over them and let the wheels slide into the water. The river had a clayey bottom so full of holes that when the off horse occasionally went into the water, he sank to his middle. "Half a horse is constantly disappearing unexpectedly," says Dickens, "and can't be found again for some time."

But at last the seven stages won through and the road itself was reached. This was a series of swamps and gravel pits. When one of the deepest holes was approached, Hosea turned around and grinned back at the English visitor, as much as to say, "Now just watch this!" The black driver screwed up his face into a terrible grimace, and leaned forward and let his horses have it with the whip. Down into the hole went the swaying stage and into the mud, which was deeper on one side than the other, tilting the coach to a dangerous angle. It trembled violently and stopped, while the inside passengers let out yells of dismay and terror. The four horses floundered about without moving an inch, and all the other horses attached to the other six coaches pranced about in sympathy.

"Hi, there!" yelled the black driver, laying about him with his whip.

"What on earth—" began a red-faced passenger, sticking his face out of a window. A large blob of mud from nowhere in particular hit him in the face, cutting off his question short, and he hastily pulled his head back inside.

"Ho, there!" yelled the driver, yanking at the reins and putting about him with his whip.

The horses began to pull violently and finally dragged the coach out of the hole and up the bank—a bank so steep that the driver's legs, and Hosea's, flew up into the air, and the latter catapulted back among the mail-bags on the roof. He rescued himself and clambered back just in time to save his smaller and more valuable sack from tumbling down the bank into the mire. The horses, meanwhile, ran up the bank, and down the other side at a fearful pace. It was impossible to stop them until a more level stretch was reached.

Hosea looked back and saw the other six coaches careening along in various degrees of confusion—but nevertheless all there. As for Dickens, he was hanging on to his hat and smiling in a pained sort of way. Hosea grinned encouragement, and the other shook his fist at him. They had no chance for words—and really there was nothing to say! The road defied description.

The ten miles or so from the Landing to Fredericksburg required two hours and a half—about brisk walking speed. Fortunately, wrote Dickens, they all got through without breaking any bones, though bruising

a great many. Every time *his* driver struck a bad hole —as he said afterward—the black would reassure him by chuckling and remarking:

"We'll git you through, sah, like a fiddle—and hope Ah please you when we git you through, sah!"

It was a sore and tired lot of passengers who climbed down from and out of the stages, which by this time had got a fresh layer of mud. They stretched their cramped limbs for half an hour or so at Fredericksburg, and then embarked on the third stage of their journey—a steam train that was to take them to Richmond. Again Hosea moved his mail-bags, counting them carefully as he did so, and holding on to the small bag. As he rested a spell from his labors, he remarked to his English acquaintance:

"See that little bag? Funny thing happened on one of my trips down in Virginia, not so long ago. When I got to Richmond I found that some fellow had tried to steal the mail. He had cut a long slit in one of the bags up on top of a coach and pulled out a packet, and made off with it. I would like to have seen his face when he opened it up somewhere out in the woods; nothing in it but some almanacs and last week's newspapers! Darn my buttons! This"— pointing to the small bag—"was right between my legs all the time; and the fellow that gets this will have to take it over my dead body!"

As he made the last remark, his usually smiling face grew stern, and his hearer knew in a flash that he was

not boasting; he was stating a simple truth. He would guard that mail with his life, if necessary.

The railway line which ran south from Fredericksburg to Richmond, a distance of about fifty-five miles, was almost as primitive in its way as the highway had been. It was roughly graded to avoid most of the hills, but occasionally an unusually steep grade would make the little engine act as though it had asthma. And curves!—the passengers decided that the road-builders had been given five dollars extra for every curve they put in. The irrepressible Hosea said that on more than one curve he could reach back and shake hands with the brakeman on the rear platform.

There were no crossties such as we see on modern roads, but only occasional cross-pieces to hold the "stringers" in place. These were long, heavy beams laid in the direction the track was going; and along the top of them was fastened a strap-iron rail—so called because it was a thin strip no thicker than a leather strap. The wheels of the cars ran along on this, and very often the speed of the train would cause these thin iron straps to work loose from their nails and fly into the air like angry snakes. "Snake-heads," in fact, was what the trainmen called them; and for them they had a wholesome fear.

"Knew a man that was killed by one of them snake-heads once," said Hosea. "He was riding along in one of the coaches, when all of a sudden that snake-head came right up through the floor and hit him so sudden

he didn't know what struck him. Darn my buttons, if it didn't!" [1]

Dickens looked at him doubtfully, to see whether or not he was joking, then climbed gingerly into one of the coaches. These coaches looked like stage-coaches that were gradually evolving into box cars. They were two or three times as long as they were wide, but had platforms front and back, tiny windows like coaches, and narrow seats on each side of a center aisle. The seats were fearful contraptions of iron, with a bright red upholstery. There were no conveniences of any sort in the car, other than the seats; but in hot weather a train-boy came through with a bucket of water, and the thirsty travelers helped themselves from the same dipper.

The engine was a four-wheeled affair, the two rear wheels being the drivers. They had wooden spokes and rims, and wrought-iron tires. A fire-box fed with wood was placed under a diminutive boiler, about seven feet long. The tender was a four-wheeled platform, with wooden sides and back, carrying an iron box for a water tank, and having space for about a half-cord of wood in front. The engine had no cab, no whistle, no cow-catcher, no bell, no headlight, no spark-arrester over the smoke-stack, "no nothing," as Hosea said later. "But"—he continued loyally—"she was a good little engine and if something didn't bust, she did her fifteen miles an hour regular!"

[1] Such accidents were, in fact, reported by early roads.

At this dizzy rate of speed it required only five hours, including frequent and lengthy stops, to negotiate the distance between the two terminals. Up a long grade the engine would crawl, its breath coming in short, labored gasps. Once at the top it would make up for lost time by coasting down at a lively rate of speed. Around the curves they would fly, at times so suddenly that the unwary passenger sitting in the dinky seat next the aisle would suddenly find himself on the floor. Then there would be a series of lurches as the brakeman put on the brakes by hand—turning the wheels attached to the brake-chains at each end of the car, until, with a final quick lurch, the whole train halted. Starting up was just as bad, for, as the slack was taken up between two cars, and the process repeated for the length of the train, the engine might get considerable headway before the people in the end car came to with a jerk and realized they were on their way!

Smoke and cinders flew back liberally, so much so that when the passengers debarked, it was hard to say whether they were white or black. But the engineer got the worst of the bargain. Not having the shelter of a cab, he was exposed to every kind of weather, and frequently had to drive through cold wind or icy rain.

Such was railroading in the "Roaring Forties" in America, and with travelers it was still a "toss-up" as to whether they wouldn't stick instead to the stage-coach, or canal-boat. For a journey of any distance

there might be no choice and they might have to take all three!

But at last the twinkling, yellow lights of Richmond hove in sight, and good indeed did they look to the thrice-weary travelers. They had gone on board the steamer at Washington the night before; had started at early dawn down the river; and had spent the entire day getting to Richmond, reaching there after dark. It had been a journey of nearly twenty-four hours—by water, by stage, and by train. But, as the tireless Hosea said, while hustling his mail-bags off the train, "We're here, I reckon!"

He loaded the bags into a wagon drawn by an ancient mule and piloted by an ancient negro. Down the single main street of Richmond they ambled, and up to the front door—and only door—of the plain wooden structure that served as post office. The postmaster waited just long enough to receive the mail, then locked up and went home. Time enough to sort the letters in the morning! About ten o'clock the next day, and the second day after leaving Washington, the folks in Richmond were reading their mail, but taking the delay as a matter of course.

As for Charles Dickens, while he sat at dinner in the hotel, on this next day after his arrival, a colored waiter with a grin that showed all his teeth placed beside his plate the latest Washington paper. Dickens gave one glance at it and said: "Take it away. Why, that's the same paper I read two days ago."

After dinner he went out for a stroll about town, when whom should he see but Hosea Higgins. He had obtained some much-needed rest, and was now on his way down to the post office to pick up the mail going northward and convey it back to Washington.

Dickens groaned inwardly when he saw his fellow-traveler, who looked as chipper as a hedge-sparrow.

"You mean to say that you are going back by that train, and over those chuck-holes, and up on that river-raft—and *like* it?" he queried.

"Sure I do! It's all in a day's work, ain't it? And as I go along the street and see folks reading their letters and papers, I say to myself, 'You're reading that because Hosea Higgins brought it to you.' And I forget about the mudholes and the spills, for I realize that I am one of the cogs in Uncle Sam's machine. I help get his mail through. It's a great job—darn my buttons, if it ain't—and this is a great country!"

The Englishman looked at him thoughtfully, and then said, with quiet respect in his voice:

"Yes—it's a great country!"

Chapter XII

THE PONY EXPRESS RIDER

A lively tale of the Old West and a young Pony Express rider named William Cody (Buffalo Bill). Also how the Pony Express riders carried the news of Lincoln's election to California in the record time of eight days.

(Time: 1860)

"IT'S a pity you're not a few years older, Billy. I would give you a job as Pony Express Rider. There's good pay in it."

Thus spoke George Chrisman, a Western express agent for a company that was on the point of launching a venture which many people called ridiculous, but which nevertheless appealed to the imagination of everybody between the Mississippi River and the Coast. It was nothing more nor less than to maintain a chain of fast riders reaching clear to California, nearly two thousand miles, for the regular carrying of the mail.

Though Chrisman spoke jestingly, the boy at his side looked up quickly.

"Oh, I say, Mr. Chrisman, give me a chance at it! I can ride as well as any man—you know I can!"

"Sure you can ride," replied his friend, good-naturedly; "but, boy, it takes more than riding—it takes *sand!*"

Before them on a table lay a St. Louis paper containing the notice which had set the whole West buzzing, and Chrisman picked it up for the boy, William Cody, to read for himself. This is what he read:

> *"To San Francisco in 8 days by the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company. The first courier of the Pony Express will leave the Missouri River on Tuesday, April 3rd, at 5 o'clock P.M., and will run regularly weekly thereafter, carrying a letter mail only. The point of departure on the Missouri River will be in telegraphic communication with the East, and will be announced in due time."*

"Aw, shucks, Mr. Chrisman, give me a chance at it, won't you?" pleaded the boy, his eyes shining. "Where is it to start from?"

"From St. Joe. Want to go over and watch 'em get away?"

"Sure I do. But I want more than that: I want to carry that mail myself!"

"Well, we'll think about it," said Chrisman laughingly.

To understand the setting of this story, we must remember that California, up to the year 1860, was as remote from the rest of the United States as Madagascar. The usual route for mails was by water, either around Cape Horn, requiring weeks, or carried across

the Isthmus of Panama from one ship to another and thence up the coast, a journey nearly as tedious. Between the Mississippi River on the east and the Pacific on the west lay hundreds of miles of trackless wilderness, barren desert, and frowning mountain. No railroad had yet pierced it, and the telegraph had yet to stretch its wires across. A war might break out in the East—as, in fact, actually threatened at the time this story opens and soon became reality—and the Californians would be blithely ignorant of it for weeks.

A quicker and steadier means of communication was a necessity. Thus thought three men whose names became famous in the Old West for their freighting and express business carried on by coach and horsemen. Their names were Russell, Majors, and Waddell, and with fine imagination they began quietly to lay plans for this fleet of fast riders, called the Pony Express. So quietly did they work that they had all their plans made and most of their equipment ready before putting the notice in the *St. Louis Dispatch,* announcing the opening date.

"Say—you'll have to have a whale of a bunch of horses and riders for that outfit!" said young Cody.

"You're right. That's one of my jobs out here—getting good horses for 'em. No horse is too good for the service. Why, we are paying as high as two hundred dollars apiece for 'em. And riders will draw down from fifty to a hundred and fifty dollars a month

—but they must be the best little old riders in the world and afraid of nothing!"

"How many will you need?" persisted the boy, his voice vibrating with eagerness.

"Well, we're planning to put on eighty riders to start, and 420 horses, for we are putting in relay stations about fifteen miles apart clear across the Plains. There'll be no monkey business about this. Our boys will ride at top speed all the time—just like Indians were after 'em—as may be the case, like as not!"

Chrisman then proceeded to paint the difficulties and dangers of this route, which were evident enough, for the West of those days was a very Wild West indeed. But the more he talked, the more eager became his listener to try Express riding for himself. Finally the older man compromised.

"You're a bit under age, Will," he said; "but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take you on as a substitute for a rider named Trotter out here on my division. He has only a short run—forty-five miles—and a change of three horses for it. That ought to be a cinch for you. You were born on horseback, I reckon!"

"That's great, Mr. Chrisman!" said the boy, who was, indeed, already famous for his feats of horsemanship.

The opening day at St. Joseph, Missouri, was a gala occasion. A great crowd had assembled in the streets, and the excitement was at fever heat. Flags were flying everywhere, and a brass band added to the hubbub.

A short-line railroad, the Hannibal and St. Joseph, had arranged to run an excursion as well as bring in the mail from the East. It was due in the afternoon, and at last the waiting throng heard a faint whistle down the track. "Here she comes!" they shouted, and up puffed the train, on time.

Scarcely had it stopped, when busy hands were transferring the mail pouches to a wagon, which rattled down the streets to the post office. A few minutes more and the Pacific mail was sorted out and ready for the Express rider. His name was Johnnie Frey, and he was a wiry little fellow, scarcely twenty years old, and weighing only 125 pounds.

Mr. Russell himself, one of the three members of the firm, adjusted the letter pouch on the saddle. It was limited to twenty pounds and contained, besides letters and a New York newspaper printed on tissue paper, a message of congratulation from President Buchanan to Governor Downey, of California. As the last buckle was adjusted, Johnnie sprang into the saddle; a few of the nearest of the excited crowd pulled hairs from his horse's tail for souvenirs, then the throng scattered to make way for him, and down the main street of St. Joe he went at a mad gallop, the people shouting themselves hoarse.

At the foot of the street at the Missouri River landing, a ferry-boat was waiting for him, and on it he dashed. Hardly had his steed's hoofs struck the planking, when the bells clanged and the craft pushed off

into midstream. The first trip of the Pony Express was begun.

On the Kansas side of the river the swift scene was reënacted. As the ferry touched the wharf and before it was made fast, Johnnie spurred his impatient horse forward, the margin of water was cleared at a bound, and horse and rider disappeared in a cloud of dust out toward the western sun. Strangers gripped each other's hands at the sight, clapped one another on the back, shouted themselves hoarse—and in more than one man's eyes tears could be seen. Yes, it meant a lot to the West!

What lay ahead? At the end of Johnnie's run, another man and yet another would spring into saddle and ride night and day to deliver that precious parcel at its destination, two thousand miles away. The route lay through Northeastern Kansas and into Nebraska, up the valley of the Platte River, across the great plateau into the foothills and over the summit of the Rockies, into the arid Great Basin, over the Wasatch Range, into the valley of Great Salt Lake, through the terrible alkali deserts of Nevada and the parched sink of Carson River, over the lofty Sierras with their snow-encumbered passes, and finally into the valley of the Sacramento, where a waiting steamer would take the mail for the last lap of its journey to San Francisco.

What a prospect! To the terrors of an untraveled country were added prowling savages, wild beasts, winds, rains, blizzards, intense cold, parching heat, the

blazing sun of noonday, the intense darkness of midnight—but through it all the riders must press forward night and day—the mail pouch *must* go through!

The wildest and most unexplored parts of America lay ahead. Along the entire route there were only four military posts, two or three hundred miles apart. The small relay stations established by the Company were the only human habitations for other hundreds of miles. Exposed as they were to the attacks of Indians, they were liable to be wiped out, and more than one station suffered this dire fate, as the tired Express riders found to their own distress after completing a toilsome run. There was no relief horse or rider waiting.

But despite these almost insurmountable difficulties, the Pony Express was established and maintained. At the same day on which Johnnie Frey rode out of St. Joe, another rider, Harry Roff, started on the eastern trip from Sacramento. Each rider covered from 75 to 125 miles, depending upon the nature of the country, and changing horses every ten, fifteen, or twenty miles. The horse tender at the lonely relay station would see him coming, a mile or two away, and would have his fresh mount saddled, bridled, and waiting. Up would come the rider at full gallop, pull his tired beast short up on its haunches, leap to the ground, transfer and buckle on his saddle-bags, and go on his way, often hardly stopping to take a gulp of water. Two minutes was the time allowance for a stop, but half that time often sufficed. The men made a speed

of about eighteen miles an hour. Harry Roff on his first eastbound trip covered the first twenty miles in fifty-nine minutes.

Meanwhile the succession of riders who relieved Johnnie Frey on his westward trip kept up the same good speed that he had set for them. The original mail-bag with the President's message was delivered in Sacramento in nine days and twenty-three hours. The same great scenes of wild excitement marked the end of this famous run, as they did its beginning. Bells were rung, whistles were blown, men shouted, and business was at a standstill. When the panting horse and rider dashed into the streets of Sacramento, they were almost mobbed. Stopping only a few moments to toss off the local mail, the rider hurried aboard a waiting steamer for the last lap of the journey down the river to San Francisco. That city was reached in the dead of night; but as soon as the whistle of the steamer heralded its approach, the city came awake as by magic. People hastily dressed came running down to the wharf. Whistles screeched their welcome, and a fire engine dashed madly out to escort the Express rider to the post office.

But during all this fever heat of the inauguration of the service, what of the boy, William Cody? Within a few days, to his great joy, his friend sent word for him to present himself for riding. He was to be put on the 45-mile run that Chrisman had mentioned. After he had filled out the application blank and an-

swered questions as to his parents and habits, he was required to swear to an oath which was required of every rider entering the Express service. This was the oath repeated by Cody with uplifted hand:

> "I, William F. Cody, do hereby swear, before the Great and Living God, that during my engagement, and while I am an employé of Russell, Majors, and Waddell, I will, under no circumstances, use profane language; that I will drink no intoxicating liquors; that I will not quarrel or fight with any other employé of the firm, and that in every respect I will conduct myself honestly, be faithful to my duties, and so direct all my acts as to win the confidence of my employers. So help me God!"

This oath told eloquently of the high character of the riders employed, as well as of the Company employing them. It could well be tacked up on the lintel of every office to-day. Within a few weeks after its establishment, in fact, the Pony Express had won the confidence of the entire nation, and later it performed inestimable service at the outbreak of the War between the States.

Cody, like the other riders, wore no special uniform. The men dressed to suit their tastes. But their usual garb was a buckskin hunting shirt, cloth trousers, high boots, and a slouch hat. Often a large handkerchief protected their necks from the sun or flies. As for

weapons, they carried a sheath knife and a pair of Colt pistols. At first they slung a carbine around their shoulders, but soon discarded this. Nearly all the riders were quite young, few exceeding twenty-five, and were light of frame and wiry.

The saddle-bag used by the rider for carrying the mail was called a *mochila*. It had openings in the center to allow it to fit snugly over the horn and tree of the saddle and yet be removable without delay. The *mochila* had four pockets called *cantinas*, one in each of its corners—so that there were two in front and two behind the rider's legs. In these *cantinas* the mail was carried under lock and key. Three had keys which permitted them to be opened at the military posts along the way, while the fourth was reserved for local or way mail stations. In this *cantina* was a time-card for noting time of arrival and departure of the rider.

The letters were wrapped in oiled silk to protect them from moisture, either from rain, or from water in fording streams, or perspiration of the horse. While the weight of the mail was limited to twenty pounds, it rarely exceeded fifteen. The postal charges at first were five dollars for each letter weighing half an ounce, which seems cheap enough when the trip is considered, but as the service got better established, the Post Office Department reduced this charge to one dollar for each half ounce. As a result, persons writing letters to their friends in San Francisco usually used a very thin tissue

paper. A few newspapers were so printed, but were not sent regularly.

As for William Cody, he entered into his new duties with a light heart. His first run was not dangerous nor long. Accustomed as he was to the saddle all his life, he treated his forty-five mile dash, using three horses, as a great lark. He had no difficulty in riding on schedule, often cutting down the time. But he was only a substitute and after a few weeks the regular man, Trotter, returned and Will was out of a job.

Riding east as far as Fort Leavenworth, he obtained a letter of recommendation from Mr. Russell, the head of the firm, and presented this to Jack Slade, the superintendent of another route. Slade—a noted and notorious character of the frontier—was just then hunting for an experienced rider to cover one of the hardest of his routes, and glanced askance at the youthful applicant. But when he read Russell's letter and learned that Cody had ridden another route satisfactorily, he decided to give him the job, despite his youth. The new route was seventy-six miles long, running from Red Buttes to Three Crossings—a place on the Sweetwater River so called because the stream, as it followed the bed of a canyon, had to be crossed three times in a distance of sixty yards. The water, being a mountain stream, was icy cold, and there were pitfalls and deep pools lurking for the unwary.

Another fording hardly less hazardous was across the North Platte, which had dangerous quicksands, the

river being half a mile wide at the ford, and twelve feet deep in places. And as if this were not enough, his route lay through hostile Indian country, and was also infested by desperadoes.

Despite these dangers, young Cody rode his route successfully for two or three weeks. He was almost on the point of thinking that it would prove as monotonous as his former one, when a series of adventures brought him up sharply. One day after riding in his usual mad galloping way, he reached the end of his journey, Three Crossings, well within the allotted time. What was his horror to find that the relief rider, who was to have taken the mail further, had been murdered, either by redskins or by bandits. It was clearly up to him, tired as he was, to carry on. Fortunately there were fresh horses, and within a few moments he had remounted and started out on a new and strange route which led him to Rocky Ridge, eighty-five miles away. Buoyed up by the perils of his trip he continued on to this terminal and then started back with the eastbound mail, ending by going again over his own division and into Red Buttes. When the tired youth almost fell off his last mount, they found that he had covered the amazing distance of 322 miles—but he had carried the mail!

On more than one occasion Cody sighted redskins, but the speed of his mount carried him out of danger. It is said that the Indians frequently stared openmouthed at the mad riding of these reckless horsemen.

Nothing like it had been seen in their tribes. But one day a band of Sioux decided they would like to add that fast pony to their string, to say nothing of an extra scalp for some warrior's belt. But young Cody had different ideas; he needed both himself. As the Sioux swooped down upon him, firing as they came, he lay flat upon his pony's back and urged the faithful little animal to still better speed. For agonizing minutes the race with death held on, the bullets and arrows whizzing all about him but luckily missing. Then the training and endurance of his mount told. He slowly drew away from the red pursuers and thundered into Sweetwater, his next stop, minutes ahead of time. However, not yet was he out of danger. The Indians had been there ahead of him, killed the keeper, and driven off all the reserve stock. There was nothing for him to do but to continue on with his tired horse for twelve miles more, where the relay station was fortunately intact.

On another occasion he was entrusted with a large sum of money in currency, and had reason to believe that bandits knew of its passage. These "road agents," as they were called, did not hesitate at murder as well as robbery, and Cody felt he must outwit them. He obtained an extra *mochila* which he stuffed with papers and placed in the regular position on the horn of his saddle. The other one with the bills was then hidden under his saddle. He had not ridden many miles when, in a lonely spot, his fears were confirmed by seeing two

masked men who stood directly in his path with loaded pistols.

"Halt, young fellow!" they challenged sharply. And as he perforce reined in, they continued, "Throw up your hands!"

Slowly young Cody's hands went up, while he never took his eyes off his assailants.

"We don't want to hurt you, young fellow," one of them continued, "but we do want that package of letters powerful bad."

"Don't you know they will hang you for fooling with the United States Mail?" Cody asked, to gain time.

"They'll have to catch us first. Now you unfasten that sack and be quick about it. If you start any monkey business we'll drill you full of holes."

Will reached around for the dummy sack, which he made a great pretense of having trouble in unfastening. Suddenly he straightened up. "Here it is!" he shouted, and hurled it directly into the face of one of the road agents. The fellow was bowled over by the blow. Quick as a flash the young Express rider dug his spurs into the side of his horse and headed full at the other man. He dodged, but got a vicious kick from one of the animal's hoofs. Away galloped Cody, not looking back. He reasoned that the surprise the bandits had gotten would prevent them from shooting, and besides they had the mail-sack they thought they wanted. He rode on unmolested to the next station and de-

livered his package of money safely. But he said afterward that he would have given a good deal to see the look on the faces of the highwaymen when they opened their sack and found nothing but waste paper.

Many were the thrills and adventures of Cody's associates also on these long, lonely rides across the Plains. In a few instances they ended tragically for some brave young fellow, who never came back, and whose bones were left to whiten alongside the trail. As for Cody, when he left the service unharmed, it was to engage in other forms of scouting quite as exciting. He has come down to fame as one of the greatest of our scouts —"Buffalo Bill."

But the supreme or "acid" test of the Pony Express service came with the election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency. It was a hair-trigger time when the North and South were squaring off at each other and threatening to fight. When Lincoln was elected in November, 1860, it was highly important that the news should be sent to the Coast as speedily as possible, in order to hold this far-away part of the country safe for the Union.

Away from St. Joseph dashed the first rider, amid excitement rivaling that day when the first letter had started west. At every relay station extraordinary plans had been made to make their usual good time even better. Picked horses were led out, at some points, two or three miles in advance of the station to furnish an extra relay and added speed. On and on the reck-

less fellows dashed, scarcely slackening speed even when riding in the dark—truly a test for any horseman's nerve! Relay after relay was clicked off in record-breaking time. The last rider dashed into Sacramento and was whisked on a waiting boat and thus taken to San Francisco, followed by yells of "Lincoln is elected! Lincoln is elected!" The total journey of exactly 1966 miles had been made in eight days.

It would seem as if human endurance had reached its limit—but the Pony Express was not through with records yet. In March of the next year, Lincoln made his first inaugural address, while the East was palpitating on the verge of War. What would the West think and do? It was of supreme importance that the Government should find out.

The Message was sent by the fastest trains to St. Joe, and again the gallant riders were told to better their best.

"Take this Message to the Coast faster than any word has ever yet gone through!" ordered Mr. Russell.

The boys, one after another along the line, repeated the words with grim earnestness. And they did. How they rode! "Pony Bob" Haslam, one of the best men that ever pressed stirrup leather, galloped at breakneck speed for 120 miles, pausing only to change mounts every ten miles, and covered his route in eight hours and ten minutes—or at the rate of nearly fifteen miles an hour. Another man rode ten miles in thirty minutes. The total journey from St. Joseph to Sacra-

mento required just seven days and seventeen hours!

The Pony Express did not die of old age; it passed away in its prime. The fall of that same year, 1861, saw the first telegraph poles pushing their way across the Plains, and before the end of the year a line had been opened through the Sierras. The click of the telegraph instrument was much more prosaic than the clatter of pony's hoofs, but it did in minutes what had required the brave horse and rider days and days to perform. So within a year and a half after its beginning, the Pony Express was no more.

In that brief time, however, what a valiant service it had performed, and what romance had gathered about its deeds! It is part and parcel with the Old West. Mark Twain, who knew the frontier in his boyhood, says in one of his early books: [1]

> "The pony rider was usually a little bit of a man, brimful of spirit and endurance. No matter what time of the day or night his watch came on, and no matter whether it was winter or summer, raining, snowing, hailing, or sleeting, or whether his 'beat' was a level, straight road, or a crazy trail over mountain crags and precipices, or whether it led through peaceful regions, or regions that swarmed with hostile Indians, he must always be ready to leap into the saddle and be off like the wind. There was no idling time for a pony rider on duty. He rode fifty miles without stopping,

[1] "Roughing It."

by daylight, moonlight, starlight, or through the blackness of darkness just as it happened. He rode a splendid horse that was born for a racer and fed and lodged like a gentleman; kept him at his utmost speed for ten miles and then, as he came crashing up to the station where stood two men holding fast a fresh, impatient steed, the transfer of rider and mail was made in the twinkling of an eye, and away flew the eager pair and were out of sight before the spectator could get a ghost of a look.

"We had had a consuming desire to see a pony rider [continues Mark Twain, who was riding in an Overland Stage] but somehow or other all that passed us and all that met us managed to streak by in the night, and so we heard only a whiz and a hail, and the swift phantom of the desert was gone before we could get our heads out of the windows. But now we were expecting one along every moment and would see him in broad daylight. Presently the driver exclaims: '*Here he comes!*' Every neck is stretched further and every eye is strained wider.

"Away across the endless dead level of the prairie a black speck appears against the sky, and it is plain that it moves. Well, I should think so! In a second or two it becomes a rider, rising and falling—sweeping toward us nearer and nearer—growing more and more distinct, more and more sharply defined—nearer and still nearer, and the flutter of the hoofs comes faintly to the ear—an-

other instant a whoop and a hurrah from our upper deck, a wave of the rider's hand, but no reply, and man and beast burst past our excited faces and go winging away like a belated fragment of a storm.

"So sudden is it all, and so like a flash of unreal fancy, that but for a flake of white foam left quivering and perishing on a mail-sack after the vision had flashed by and disappeared, we might have doubted whether we had seen any actual horse and man at all, maybe."

Chapter XIII

ON THE OVERLAND STAGE

Another tale of carrying the mail in the Old West before the railroad came through, showing why, with Indians and road agents, the mail was late sometimes, and sometimes did not get through at all.

(Time: 1861)

"HERE she comes!"

Down the main street of old Denver a cloud of dust arose, and from its midst a confused vision of plunging horses and a huge, lumbering vehicle. Nearer it came and took shape to clearer detail showing six madly galloping horses and a driver who sat aloft and cracked his whip. Up to the little station the stage drew with a flourish. No matter how toilsome might be the journey between stations, the stage always came in with a roar.

"Right on time, for sure!"

"Oh, Bill Jennings always comes in on time, unless something busts."

"Or a redskin or road agent takes a pot shot at him!"

Such were the good-natured comments of the crowd,

while around the stage all was bustle and confusion. As passengers climbed out and others got in, an alert-looking young fellow with a brace of pistols in his belt and a carbine slung around his shoulder, climbed nimbly down from his seat alongside the driver and handed a mail-sack to a waiting man. Other sacks neatly piled on top further showed his job. He represented Uncle Sam.

"All 'board!" yelled the driver, as soon as the teams had been changed.

A last mad scramble, a waving of hands and crying of "Good-bye!"—and away went the C. O. C. & P. P. stage. It ran on a branch line from Denver, leaving three times a week for Julesburg where it connected with the main line running to the Missouri River. The total distance for through passengers was six hundred and forty-two miles; the schedule time was six days; the stage fare was $75, not counting meals or "berths." As for the former, one was charged anywhere from fifty cents to one dollar a meal at the little dingy way stations for food literally gobbled down. Sleeping quarters, so called, were to be found only on the seats of the swaying coach itself.

Such was travel on the Overland stages in the early Sixties.

The stage itself was a sturdy, round-bellied contraption called a "Concord," as it was built by the famous firm of carriage makers, the Abbott Downing Company, of Concord, New Hampshire. It was roomy

enough for nine passengers inside, except when they tried to sleep; while the box, as the driver's seat was called, would hold three more, but was usually occupied only by the driver and the mail-carrier. Back of them, on the roomy top, were the luggage and mail-sacks. These were protected from the weather by a large leather flap, called the "boot." Under the driver's seat was another boot, where the more valuable mail and express parcels were stowed.

When the coach had left the Concord shop it was a glistening black, but days and nights of hard service on the Plains had left it a nondescript, dust-covered, brownish gray, with liberal splotches of dried mud. Through this layer of dirt, the gilt letters, "C. O. C. & P. P." strove valiantly to make themselves seen. They stood for "Central Overland California and Pike's Peak"—but everybody just said "Overland" for short.

Out on the dusty but much traveled highway leading from Denver, the six horses went along at an easy canter. The driver saved their gallops for his "entrances"—to use another "stage" term. They could do five miles an hour up hill and down dale, and were scheduled to cover the first lap of their route, a little over one hundred miles, in twenty-four hours. And they did it, too, unless something happened. That something might be only a "thorough-brace busted," but it stopped them completely until it was fixed. The thorough-braces were thick, heavy, leather straps which supported the body of the coach; it was slung

upon them instead of metal springs, and they served to ease up many of the jars and bumps of the uneven road.

The first stop out was Box Elder, sixteen miles, and known as a "swing" station, for they stopped here only long enough to change horses. The next beyond, Living Spring, was a "home" station, for here meals of a sort were served.

Bob Alder, the young mail-carrier, had been riding the Overland route now for six months and was already a familiar character with the rough-and-ready Westerners. At each stop he and the driver, Bill Jennings, were pestered with questions.

"Any news of the War?" was the first that came from every lip.

"Nothing much. Bill Cody, the Pony rider, says that since Fort Sumter was fired on, and Lincoln sent in his call for troops, there have been big doings in all the Eastern towns and cities, but mostly recruiting so far. McClellan is licking his army into shape down in Northern Virginia and the lid will sure pop off, one of these days."

"Well, just so the Rebs don't do some of that licking first!"

"You said it, boy," remarked another. "This country's sure in for a whale of a fight!'

Such grim banter as this was heard at every station in the West in those thrilling early months of the War. Before the telegraph wires were strung, it was the Pony

Express and the stage lines which brought the only news of that dread conflict on the Atlantic seaboard. Lincoln's first message and his call for troops a few weeks later had each been relayed to the Coast in less than eight days. And now it was the lumbering coach which carried the newspapers and bulkier items and served all the towns, while the Pony rider dashed madly on ahead with the big news.

The Overland route was only one of at least half a dozen important lines that had been established to California within ten years, or since the gold fever had sent thousands stampeding in that direction. The longest of all, the Butterfield route, followed the Santa Fé Trail and ended at Los Angeles, then a straggling frontier town. The distance was 2,800 miles—the scheduled time twenty-five days—a tremendous undertaking indeed for a horse-drawn coach, to say nothing of the hostile Comanches or Apaches in their path. But for several months this remarkable route was maintained, and it was only abandoned with the outbreak of the Civil War, as it lay in territory claimed by the seceding Southern States.

Meanwhile, out on the Overland route and again under way, Alder and Jennings sat aloft and scanned the landscape for any signs.

"Haven't seen any buffler [1] lately," said Bob.

"Nope," replied Bill, as he flicked a fly expertly with his whip from a sweating horse's flank. "And I ain't

[1] Buffalo.

hankerin' to see many. Where there's buffler, there's liable to be Injuns. And if there ain't Injuns, why, the pesky beasts themselves give a lot of trouble. You remember that time last month they crowded into the road so thick, I had to go ahead of the hosses and shoo 'em away with my whip."

"Yep, I remember. Lucky there wasn't a stampede."

A few minutes of silence while the big coach lumbered on across the level road, then Bill broke it with the remark: " 'Bout time to be sightin' Cody, ain't it?"

"Yep, if he's on time. *We* are."

"Yonder he comes, to the dot!"

A small cloud of dust arose beyond a clump of cottonwood trees, and toward them headed a young rider bending low over his mount and coming lickety-cut. As the interested passengers thrust their heads out of the windows and hailed him with cheers, he reached and passed them in a larger cloud. He uttered no word—only waved his hand and grinned at Alder up on the seat—then was gone.

"Right on the dot, as you say," repeated the mail man proudly. There were no jealousies in that service. The stage riders off duty would regale you by the hour with tales of wonderful long-distance rides made on the ponies.

"Bill's one of the best in the service," said Alder.

"Yep, too bad he's leaving it," answered the driver; and in answer to Alder's look of interrogation he went

on to say: "Goin' to go into scout service in the regular army, I hear tell."

"You don't say. Well, lots of the fellows are threatening to quit for regular service. Ought to do it myself, I reckon, only some of us have got to stick on the job and get this here mail through."

"Yep—and if you're lookin' for bullets or other stray missiles such as arrers, I reckon you'll find 'em out West just as well as down South!"

Both chuckled at the grim joke, not realizing how soon the jest would turn to earnest.

"Say," said Alder after a while and by way of making conversation, "do you know how much Mr. Holliday is putting into this route to the Coast?"

"Never heard him say," replied the driver; "but you can figure it out for yourself. He must have bought about a thousand hosses, and he buys the best—about $200 apiece. These here Concord coaches set him back a thousand apiece, and he has at least fifty. You don't think much about harness, but for six hosses it'll set you back $150 a set. Then there's repairs. A busted thorough-brace will cost you ten dollars, and they're all the time a-breakin'. Besides that, there's the stations and the extra help needed there; and the rations for the stock; and Lord knows what all. Why, I'll bet his outfit alone cost him half a million dollars, to say nothin' of salaries!"

"Sufferin' prairie dogs, but that's a lot of money!" said Bob.

On this particular trip Bob felt more than usually responsible. He had twice the amount of mail matter, so much, indeed, that they stowed some of it inside, and carried only five passengers. One of these, a facetious young fellow who seemed to take everything as a huge joke, afterwards wrote up his trip in a book which was widely read, in the East as well as the West. His name was Clemens, and he said: [1]

> "We changed horses every ten miles, all day long, and fairly flew over the hard level road. We jumped out and stretched our legs every time the coach stopped, and so the night found us still vivacious and unfatigued."

Everything had gone fine all day, he continues, and the passengers were congratulating themselves, when—

> "The conductor's face appeared at a lifted curtain, and his lantern glared in on us and our wall of mail matter. He said, 'Gents, you'll have to turn out a spell. Thorough-brace is broke.'
>
> "I turned to and helped the rest get out the mail-sacks. It made a great pyramid by the roadside when it was all out. When they had mended the thorough-brace, we filled the two boots again, but put no mail on top and only half as much inside as there was before. The conductor bent all the seat backs down, and then filled the coach just half full of mail-bags from end to end. We objected loudly to this, for it left us no seats. But

[1] "Roughing It," by Mark Twain.

A LAST SCRAMBLE, A WAVING OF HANDS AND CRYING "GOOD-BY," AND AWAY WENT THE STAGE.

the conductor was wiser than we, and said a bed was better than seats, and, moreover, this plan would protect his thorough-braces. We never wanted any seats after that. The lazy bed was infinitely preferable. I had many an exciting day subsequently, lying on it reading the statutes and Dictionary, and wondering how the characters would turn out. . . .

"As the sun went down and the evening chill came on, we made preparation for bed. We stirred up the hard, leather letter-sacks and the knotty canvas bags of printed matter (knotty and uneven because of projecting ends and corners of magazines, boxes, and books). We stirred them up and redisposed them in such a way as to make our bed as level as possible. And we did improve it, too, though after our work it had an upheaved and billowy look about it like a little piece of a stormy sea. Next we hunted up our boots from odd nooks among the mail-bags where they had settled, and put them on. Then we got down our coats, vests, pantaloons, and heavy woolen shirts from the armloops where they had been swinging all day, and clothed ourselves in them, for, the weather being hot, we had looked to our comfort. All things now being ready, we stowed the uneasy Dictionary where it would lie as quietly as possible, and placed the water canteen and the pistols where we could find them in the dark. Then we fastened down the coach curtains all around and made the place as dark as any place could be.

Finally, we rolled ourselves up like silkworms, each person in his own blanket, and sank peacefully to sleep."

The next day brought a different story. In the morning after breakfast and the change of horses, Bob and Bill up on the seat saw nothing to break the monotony except some fleeing antelope with their flicker of white tails, and the usual prairie dog towns, with their solemn citizens sitting up on their haunches to watch the mail go by.

A little later there was a stir of interest when they caught up with and passed a long string of emigrant wagons, fifty or more, and mostly of the prairie schooner type. They were usually drawn by oxen and carried the women and children, while the men rode alongside to guard them and to drive the cattle. To Bob and Bill this sight was as familiar as the prairie dogs. Hardly a day passed without sight of one of these trains.

It was toward the middle of the afternoon when they "got theirs," as they expressed it. The horses had been jogging along at an even trot when Alder suddenly laid his hand on Jennings' arm.

"Look yonder," he said tersely.

Jennings looked and nodded. "Injuns! Wonder what they're up to."

He was not long in finding out. There were a dozen or more, riding in single file, about half a mile away

and on a line with the stage. They must have seen the stage, too. For, urging their ponies forward at a gallop, they now began to draw in closer with the evident intention of heading the stage off.

Without another word, Alder unslung his gun from his shoulder and examined his pistols. Jennings also carried two Colt pistols and quietly adjusted them for instant use.

"Sioux or Cheyennes, I reckon," said Bill. "They've got their war paint on, and may be out on the path after another tribe. Again they may be layin' for that emigrant train back there, and meanwhile just for devilment are takin' it out on us."

Bob nodded, his lips set tight in a firm line. The redskins seemed to be armed with bows and arrows, with the exception of the leader, who waved a gun ostentatiously. He evidently felt his importance and was spoiling for a fight. As they drew in nearer, their purpose was more clear. They wanted to disable the horses.

Nearer they came but, strangely enough, without uttering any war whoops. Then at two hundred yards away, one of the braves straightened up and let fly an arrow. Thud! it sounded as it struck the turf not ten feet ahead of the team.

"You *would*, would you?" snarled Bob, and fired his carbine at the offending warrior. The savage, however, had instantly ducked on the far side of his horse, after shooting, and the bullet whined harmlessly over his head.

Thud! another brave had sped his arrow. It sank three inches into a mail-sack not two feet behind them. Then came another arrow and yet another, and things began to get lively.

Bracing his feet on the dash-board, Bill lashed his horses into a gallop. For the moment he must leave all the fighting to Bob. But presently shots were heard from the inside of the coach. Clemens and the other four passengers were taking a hand in the fray! Bob did not shoot wildly or frequently. He knew that a part of the savages' stratagem was to get him to use up his present loads and then close in. They kept just out of easy range, only darting in, now and again, by ones and twos to launch an arrow at the faithful beasts. One arrow struck the top of the lead horse's harness, and glanced off. The horse shied, but steadied down.

"You *would,* would you?" growled Bill in his turn, and quick as a flash drew one of his guns and fired. The offending redskin reeled in his seat and clutched at his left arm as he rode away.

"Winged one of 'em anyhow, by Ned!" said Bill, still driving forward furiously.

The fight, which degenerated into a race, lasted an hour. The Indians did not care to close in, but tried to hit either men or horses at long range. Two other mail-sacks were wounded, but not to the death. Bob's hat was carried off by one arrow which nearly scalped him, it burned so close. Twice he made a hit, but upon

the ponies, one tumbling headlong, carrying its rider with it.

How much longer the running fight would have continued they could not guess, but the chief's own recklessness brought it to an abrupt close. Riding a little nearer, he brought his gun to his shoulder for the first time, to take a pot shot at them.

"Bend down quick, Bill, and give me more room!" said the mail-carrier, who was on the far side. The driver ducked, and Alder straightened up like a flash, his own carbine at his shoulder. So quickly did he aim, that the motion and report seemed instantaneous. But he had not fired a split second too soon. With a yell of pain the chief let fall his gun, discharging as it went. It had been shot out of his hands and probably some fingers went with it.

The Indians scattered and ran, with a parting fusillade, Bob and the passengers firing a few extra shots for good measure. Just then an exclamation from the driver and a commotion in the team told them they were not yet out of the woods. Jock, the beautiful lead horse, had been wounded. An arrow—one of the last—was quivering in his side, and a bright crimson stream was gushing out.

Bringing the plunging horses to an abrupt halt, Bill threw the lines to Bob and sprang down. He swore savagely, and included every redskin on the Plains in his maledictions; for a driver's team was his pride, and Jock had long been a favorite with Jennings. It took

him but a moment to ease off the harness, and draw the quivering animal free. Jock's eyes rolled pitifully, and he turned on his two-footed friend a look of almost human entreaty.

"Too late, Jock, old boy," soothed the driver, patting him on the nose. "There ain't but one kindness I can do you, but it shore goes against the grain to do it!"

He drew one of his Colts and fired it at the faithful horse's head. The animal sank dead at his feet. It was a mercy to the poor, suffering brute—the hard mercy of the Plains. Tears were streaming down the driver's face as he came back to the stage, but Bob's own cheeks were wet in sympathy.

"Jock was just about the finest horse in the service," he muttered. "I've known him since he was a colt."

"If I could get just one more crack at them red varmints!" said Bill, and swore again. But the Indians were but dots on the Plain by this time. They had had enough for once.

"What shall we do now?" asked one of the passengers. They had all climbed out, and still carried their pistols.

"Put up your guns. Show's over," said Jennings gruffly to hide his emotion. "You can lend a hand here, and we'll shift the harness so as to have only one hoss in front. Next station ain't but two miles away—that's another reason the redskins quit—and we can make shift there without much trouble."

They did. The lone lead horse acted skittish at first, without his companion; and all the animals still showed the excitement of the fight and race. But Bill coaxed instead of threatening. He did not wield his whip once. He talked to them: "All right, Jenny, old girl! There, Jim, what's the matter with you? Sally, quit your kickin'! Get along there, Bud!" And by the time the "home" station was reached, with a welcome hot supper, the team was clicking along as though nothing had happened.

"That fellow, Bill Jennings, knows every darn horse by name on his whole route, and he shore can handle 'em in a pinch," said Bob Alder admiringly, to a group at one end of the supper-table.

At the other end of the table, Bill hadn't much to say about his part in the fight, but "passed the buck" to the carrier.

"That fellow, Bob Alder, is all right," he said. "He set up on the box cool as a cucumber durin' that little fracas, but *quick*—say, you oughta've seen the surprised look in that chief's face when he shot his gun out of his hand! As long as Uncle Sam has carriers like *him,* that there mail is goin' *through!*"

Chapter XIV

THE FAST MAIL

How the mail is carried on the modern limited express trains at a mile a minute—and how it is sorted, dropped off and picked up without stopping.

(Time: 20th Century)

"HERE you are, Bill—the bag for Erie."

"O. K., Jim."

Neither man wasted any more words. One had lifted a mail pouch from its rack, deftly fastened it, and the two had hoisted it into position on a business-like crane. A small door was opened, and the bag disappeared somewhere out into the night. A few minutes more and a dull thud was heard as of some object striking on the outside. The door was opened again, and in swung the crane, this time bearing another bag which any one might have thought was the first one. But Bill and Jim knew better. Quickly disengaging it from its hook, they emptied its contents on a small table and started to get busy.

The room in which they were working quietly but swiftly had two long rows of racks on which were fastened sacks with their mouths yawning wide. They

ran nearly the length of the room, and the two men stood in the narrow aisle between them, and with quick fingers and keen eyes sorted the stuff on the table—mostly small parcels and newspapers. With unerring precision they pitched the bundles first into one receptacle and then into another. Some of the more distant bags were at least ten feet away, but in the parcel plopped with a thud. Both men could have qualified for quoit pitchers.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the room stood another quiet man in front of a series of pigeon holes not unlike those seen in any post office. He had a batch of letters in his hand, taken from the same incoming bag, and he was sorting out the letters by towns. All he looked at was the state and town; it was no concern of his whether the missive was some highly perfumed bit of feminine correspondence or a business dun. In they went, click, click, click, click.

Occasionally one of the men would pause to take the kink out of his shoulders, wipe his forehead, or take a drink of water. But they indulged in no small talk. It distracted their attention and led to mistakes, and these mail clerks prided themselves on their freedom from mistakes.

As for the long room which I have already described to you in part, there was nothing else about it that was in any way remarkable. It had bins and racks everywhere, but all arranged with careful forethought. A closer look would reveal the fact that the walls were of

steel, and that the whole room was built as substantially as an office safe. As the men walked about, they braced their feet apart much like sailors on ships at sea. A glance out of one of the small windows would have revealed the reason. It was night, and the occasional lights one saw whisked by like phantoms—or like insane fireflies. Zip! And they were a mile away—back behind one.

You have already guessed the reason. This room and its busy clerks were being whirled along at the rate of a mile a minute. Their car was one of a string of steel coaches drawn by a giant mogul of the rails—the Limited. As a small town was reached there would be a confused jangling of signal bells, the click of switches on the rails, and a blurr of grouped lights in and around the station—that was all. With a warning blast from its whistle the Limited roared on into the night.

At some of the larger towns the crane swung out to drop a bag on the station platform, and to clutch with steel fingers another bag suspended for it. Thus the mail was delivered and collected without the loss of a second.

All night the clerks worked, and with the dawn their work for this run was finished. By the time the train had entered the New York Terminal, every bag was ready and waiting for the mail trucks backed up at the platform. Hardly had the train come to a stop, when the city men dashed into the car, to pass the bags out into the motor trucks. Then away *they* went to

the big post office, to the end that the downtown business men might have their Western mail that morning.

"So long, Bill!"

"So long, Jim!"

With this final hail, the two taciturn clerks, who had hardly exchanged a dozen sentences all night long, stepped wearily off the car to go home for some breakfast and sleep.

That afternoon in his modest home in Pelham, William Henderson, known to his fellow-workers as Bill, sat smoking his pipe at peace with the world. He was off duty for a whole day, and presently he was going to work in his garden. His small son, Bill Junior, aged ten, meanwhile was pestering him with questions. He was a walking interrogation point, and he wanted to know.

His father had taken him, one day, to see the inside of a railway mail car, but could not take him on a trip as that was against the rules. The boy was fascinated by all the bags and bins and cubby-holes, and the thought that here Daddy and the other men sorted the mail for towns while the train was going at full speed.

"Tell me, Daddy," he said, "don't you ever make mistakes?"

Bill Senior smiled and took his pipe out of his mouth.

"Being human, I guess we all make mistakes," he replied. "But our business is to keep 'em down as small as possible. You say you don't like to have to stand 'exams' at school. Do you know that your Daddy has

to stand an 'exam' every month or so? Fact! And, what's more, our passing grade is 97½."

"Gee whiz!"

"Yep, that's what it is; but most of us make as high as 99."

Bill Junior whistled and looked at him incredulously.

"Oh, I'm not stringing you, as you say," continued his father. "We try to be *letter perfect*. Every so often we are called in without warning and given a job before the Inspector, sorting out letters and throwing parcels and papers in a car just like the one we run on. I have checked 2,500 or 3,000 without making a single mistake.

"And that's not all, by any means. Before a railway clerk gets his job, he must pass rigid mental and physical tests. That means that his body has got to be in good shape as well as his mind. We have Civil Service examinations, and, believe me, boy, if you think your school tests are hard, just you watch out for little old Civil Service! I am not any tin wonder at it, but I have memorized as high as 10,000 items, and I have 'em all stored up here now. [Tapping his forehead.] Post office addresses, railway lines, junctions, schedules, time of arrival at hundreds of stations—it's all here!"

The boy looked at his father with undisguised awe. "How did you ever do it?" he asked.

"Just by learning one thing at a time—and holding on to it."

Bill Junior sat silent a moment, and then asked:

"How did carrying mail on the trains ever start anyhow, Dad?"

"That's a big question. You know, the railroad in America is just a hundred years old. At first the engines and cars were very crude—likewise the rails. Then as the lines and equipment began to get better, Uncle Sam began to think about using them to carry his mail. Wait a bit. My father, as you know, was a mail clerk before me; I guess it's in the blood; he had some old books and papers on the subject, and I'll see if I can lay my hands on any of 'em."

He went into the house and in a few minutes returned with a book.

"Here it is," he said, "the first record of a railway mail car in America. It is taken from an old newspaper called *Niles' Register*, and the date is May 19, 1838:

> " 'Mail cars constructed under the direction of the Post Office Department are now running on the railroads between Washington and Philadelphia. They contain two apartments: one appropriated to the use of the great mails, and the other to the way-mails; and a post office agent. The latter apartment is fitted up with boxes, labeled with names of all the small offices on or near the railroad lines. It has also a letter-box in front, into which letters may be put up to the moment of starting the cars, and anywhere on the road.
>
> " 'The agent of the Post Office Department attends the mail from the post offices at the ends of

> the route, and sees it safely deposited in his car. As soon as the cars start, he opens the letter-box and takes out all the letters, marking them so as to designate the place where they are put in. He then opens the way-mail bag and distributes its contents into the several boxes. As the cars approach a post office, the agent takes out the contents of the proper box and puts them into a pouch. The engineer slackens the speed of the train, and the agent hands the pouch to the postmaster or a carrier, who stands beside the track to take it, receiving from him at the same time another pouch with the matter to be sent from that office. . . . Well executed, the plan must be almost perfection of mail arrangements. It is intended, when it can be conveniently done, to extend it through to New York."

"They had the right idea, away back in those days, you see, but it was a good many years after that until a real railway service was started. There were too many little jerk-water lines of road that ran pretty much as they pleased, and charged the Government fancy prices for carrying the mail at all. When one of the roads boosted up the price to five hundred dollars a mile, the Postmaster-General tried another scheme. He had his carriers buy regular passenger tickets on the train and check their mail through in trunks. The roads caught on to this scheme, and began to 'forget' or 'mislay' a trunk, and there was more trouble until

the Government finally passed laws regulating rates. And of course, back in those days, postage was awfully high. Instead of two cents you pay now for a letter, you might have to pay twenty-five or thirty cents.

"It was not until the year 1860, just before the Civil War, that steps were taken to set up a real National service. The D.P.O., or Distributing Post Office, was planned for, with continuous routes and clerks who sorted out the mail en route. My father was in the War and at its close got a job on one of these first lines. It was called a 'post office on wheels' and ran from Chicago to Clinton, Iowa. In those days, just after the War and up to about the year 1870, there weren't more than 600 employees in the whole service, and the total amount of track covered was about 20,000 miles. Now your Dad belongs to an army of 25,000 workers—all slinging mail—and the roads we ride over while we do it, if laid end to end, would reach around the earth ten times, or from here to the moon.

"Our army is organized into fifteen grand divisions, each with its head officer, called a Superintendent. Then there are Inspectors and other officers, to see that there are no loose ends. Yes, it is one of the finest organized armies in the world, and it is because of its fine system that you can put two cents on a letter—or even write on a one-cent postcard—drop it in the nearest corner box, and know that within the next day or two it will be delivered a thousand miles away. And for a few cents more you can send it by airplane.

HARDLY HAD THE TRAIN COME TO A STOP, THAN THE MAIL-BAGS WERE PASSED OUT OF THE CAR.

"I have often heard my Dad tell about the first through trip that was made by a mail train from Chicago to New York. It was an exclusive mail train, if you please—didn't even carry passengers. Father was as proud as Punch at being one of the clerks selected for the trial run. It left New York, at the Grand Central Station, September 16, 1875, and made only a few stops. The experiment was tried of dropping off and picking up mail without slackening speed, and it is astonishing how well it worked. The inside of the cars was not much different from the ones we travel in today, only simpler. But the cars were all of wood; they didn't build them of steel in those days. I shall tell you more about that later. The plan was to grab the bags as they went along and sort their contents on the train, having it all ready for delivery at the Chicago end of the line.

"A General Superintendent named Bangs, who had been originally appointed to a smaller job by Lincoln, thought out the idea, and persuaded William H. Vanderbilt of the New York Central to try it. This special fast mail train consisted of four postal cars and one 'palace' car, the latter being occupied by Vice-president Wilson, Superintendent Bangs, and other officials. The mail cars were all painted white, with 'The Fast Mail' in gilt letters on each side. The United States coat of arms was also done in full colors on the side; and each car was named for the governor of a state. I tell you, it was a smart-looking outfit!

"The engine was small and weak-looking compared with the giants of to-day. Its four driving-wheels were of about five-foot diameter, and it had a big, bell-shaped smokestack. But that engine certainly could travel! It hauled its five coaches across country at break-neck speed and went through all but the biggest towns without stopping at all. It had the right of way, and even the Limited passenger trains had to side-track for it.

"Dad said that in the sorting cars they had bags of several colors. The ones in bright red were for the towns reached earliest on the run. But he said that it was a hard job to throw mail accurately, or even to stand up, until you got used to the lurching and swaying of those dinky little cars on a light roadbed.

"The train left Grand Central Station at 4:15 in the morning, and although delayed three times by hot boxes and losing an hour, it reached Chicago at 6:27 the next morning, eight minutes ahead of schedule time. They had lost half an hour at Elkhart, Indiana, from a hot box, and the strain of making up the lost time was so great on the already overtaxed engineer, that he fainted in his cab as he closed the throttle in the Chicago station. But they had made the great run in twenty-six hours—marvelous time for those days—and had clipped twelve hours off the best previous mail delivery between the two cities.

"Those first few mail cars for through points were only the beginning. Within a short time the Pennsyl-

vania Railroad also put on a gorgeously painted train for mail only. But in going at a fast clip with flimsy cars they were taking chances, and the poor mail clerks had to pay the penalty, often with their lives. It began to be ranked as what we call an extra hazardous occupation, and the railway men were paid higher than the ones in the local post office. My Dad nearly lost his life, and it is a miracle how he ever escaped. A bridge at Ashtabula, Ohio, gave way on a later trip, and the whole train was dumped into the river. It was a bad accident and one where steel cars wouldn't have helped much. Dad had both legs broken and was nearly drowned. He was in the hospital for several weeks and later took an inside job and was given a pension.

"The worst feature about those wooden cars was that in a collision or wreck they would crumple up, or perhaps take fire. Then what chance would the men inside have? It is only within the last few years that they have all been replaced by steel ones, and the casualty list has dropped away down. I like the railway service, but I certainly would quit it if they still had those wooden death-traps."

Bill Junior had listened absorbed to this story of the mails. It was only when his father had stopped to light his pipe again that he ventured another question.

"Daddy, why do you want to travel all the time? Why don't you get some work in the city like Mr. Jenkins or Mr. Robinson? They can come home every night."

"Well, son, as I said a while ago, I guess it's in the blood. Maybe when I get a little older I shall settle down. But just now I like to think of myself as being a member of this great army of peace. And I feel that I, too, am doing my bit; that I belong.

"Son, it is the greatest business in the world—this of carrying Uncle Sam's mail. I haven't begun to tell you the half of it. The rural free delivery, the parcels post, the postal saving system, the special Air Service and other special deliveries, are all a part of its later development. Our Post Office Department is without question the most gigantic of all organizations. It handles more pieces, employs more men, spends more money, touches more interests, reaches more homes, uses more agencies, goes through more details, and has more outlets than any other business public or private all over the world. In England, France and Germany the Post Office Departments also have charge of the telegraph, which we do not have here; but in spite of this fact, we do more business than any of these countries. We spend upwards of six hundred millions of dollars a year.

"But back of all this great sum of money is the human service. Don't forget that, my boy. It is the driving impulse of your Dad and thousands of others like him. Nothing stops the mail. It must and shall go through."

Chapter XV

THE FIRST DAWN-TO-DUSK FLIGHT

How a letter given to an aviator at early dawn, in New York, was delivered at sunset that same day in San Francisco. The record-breaking transcontinental flight of Lieutenant Maughan of the U. S. Army.

(Time: 1924)

"WELL, the third time's the charm!" said an airman, grinning cheerfully, as he adjusted his close-fitting helmet and visor and stepped aboard a fast pursuit plane, in Mitchel Field. As he spoke, he tucked carefully away in an inside pocket of his leather jacket a letter from Mayor Hylan of New York, addressed to Mayor Rolph of San Francisco.

It was, indeed, the third try that the birdman was making for his distant goal. But Lieutenant Russell Maughan, U. S. Army, was not of the quitting type. He had distinguished himself during the World War by bringing down at least four German airplanes, not to mention assistance given to his brother flyers scores of times, over the Hindenburg Line. And he had further made his mark, in peace times, by winning an

annual Pulitzer Prize, flying at the then unheard-of speed of 206 miles an hour. Now he was putting his pluck and skill at the service of his country to shorten the time of mail delivery to the Pacific Coast.

Maughan had been through two disheartening experiences in this attempt. Both had been in the summer of 1923, almost a year before the present story starts. On the last day of June he had begun his first ambitious flight to beat the sun in its westward course. His idea was to start in the East with the peep of dawn and fly steadily with the sun across the continent, reaching San Francisco by the close of day.

To deliver a letter in one day from Coast to Coast! What a magnificent thought! Those of my readers who have followed the stories in this present book—of the Pony Express and the stage pursuing their comparatively slow, painful way across the Plains; and of the first attempts to put down a line of steel for the locomotive which even now requires four days for the journey—can appreciate this stupendous plan to link up the borders of our land in a single day.

It is true that we already had Air Mail of a sort to the West, before Lieutenant Maughan's mad dash. At the close of the War our Government began putting in experimental lines. It started with a route from New York to Washington, which was maintained so successfully that other Eastern cities, one by one, began to be linked up. Presently the airmen with their mail-bags flew into Cleveland, then Chicago, then Kansas City

and Omaha. By the year 1921 the Post Office Department was ready to proceed further with this fascinating game. A route was laid out extending clear across to San Francisco, and the first flyers went only in daylight, entrusting their bags to the railway trains at night, other flyers picking them up again in the morning. Then great beacon lights were set up to guide them on their way, and within a few months the mail planes flew day and night. In the year 1923, the first test was made for a continuous flight, and the pioneer mail-flyer made the astonishingly good time of twenty-six hours and fourteen minutes, from New York to San Francisco, a distance of 2,670 miles—or an average, including stops, of a hundred miles an hour. Somewhat faster than the Pony Express of old days!

But still our airmen were not satisfied. They must fly as fast as the sun itself—or as fast as it appears to fly; for our old Earth is what is actually doing the flying. Maughan was only one of several ambitious aviators who were eager for the test, and was greatly delighted when the War Department assigned him to the job.

In his first attempt he played in hard luck. Before he had crossed Pennsylvania, a low fog arose, which blotted out the land entirely. He lost his bearings and reached his first scheduled stop, Dayton, an hour and a half behind time. He made 160 miles an hour during his Mid-West flight, but engine trouble developed. His gasoline feed line had become clogged and he had to abandon the trip at St. Joseph, Missouri.

Undaunted, he tried again in the middle of July—this time using a small Curtiss pursuit plane with a wing spread of only thirty-two feet. As it swiftly rose in the air of early dawn, it looked and acted like an angry wasp; and it was only a matter of seconds until it was lost to sight. Again he found a haze over the tops of the Alleghanies, but by flying low he kept his bearings and also conserved a speed of 150 miles an hour. He kept up this pace clear across to St. Joseph, stopping for refueling only at Dayton.

St. Joseph was his half-way station and he made it by noon, but his stop there took longer than he had planned, so he pushed his small craft to still higher speed —170 miles an hour—as he looked grimly at his rival, the sun, beginning to drop in the western sky. Across Nebraska they raced, the airman's pulses thrilling as in a horse race; for was not this the greatest, most daring speed test of all—with Old Sol himself as the antagonist!

But as onward he flew far swifter than any bird, the sweet air of heaven gradually gave place to something else. He sniffed again and again, and his look of exultation gave place to one of worry. He detected the acrid odor of burning grease or oil. Skilled as he was in such signs, he knew at once what was wrong. His oil line had sprung a leak, and the precious fluid was dripping down on the hot cylinders. How long could he stay aloft? The Rockies were below him, and to land meant almost certain death.

He decided to press on and chance it. The motor still hummed steadily, but now another danger threatened. The burning oil sent back a gas that almost suffocated him. He crouched lower in the cockpit, and grimly held on to his controls. On and on he flew. His breath came in shuddering gasps; his nasal passages and throat became parched; his eyes grew bloodshot. Protesting pains shot through the back of his head and up and down his spine. He drove at last by brute force and instinct, rather than reason. He *must* go on! He *must* go on! If he could only reach Cheyenne, his next relief station, all might yet be well.

Of the agony of those hours, mental and physical, he was only dimly conscious. He would not say much about it afterwards. At 2:30, Mountain Time, the watchers at Cheyenne saw the little, wasp-like plane approaching. Experts noted that it wavered slightly, but its pilot regained control and it came down in the landing field with scarcely a jolt. As the assistants rushed up to congratulate him and offer aid, they saw what looked like a drunken man, his face the color of a beet, his eyes wide and staring, his mouth open as if gasping for air.

"My oil line!" he gasped—then fell back unconscious.

Carefully and tenderly they lifted him out of the cockpit and stretched him on a bit of canvas, while mechanics went swiftly to work on the engine. They found only a cupful of oil left in the reservoir. He

would have had to make a forced landing in a few minutes more. The feed tube itself was so damaged that it was impossible to repair it in time. Old Sol had meantime gone on his way, victor a second time.

It was not until the following spring (1924) that the U. S. Air Service put its O.K. upon a third attempt —and once again they gave Lieutenant Maughan the much coveted permission. His other failures had only made him the keener.

"Give me a plane that is all right in its feed lines, fellows, and I shall make it!" he said.

They did. A brand-new Curtiss was made for him, with a twelve-cylinder motor capable of making an average speed of 160 miles, without overheating. It had been tested out day after day, and—as the mechanics delightedly expressed it—"it delivered the goods." A little larger than his wasp, it could carry 170 gallons of gasoline and nine of oil; but relief stations and mechanics were stationed at half a dozen spots on the way across. This time there wasn't going to be any "maybe."

June 21st, the longest day in the year, speaking in terms of hours of light, was chosen for the flight, but a fog on and around Mitchel Field forced a postponement. Two days later conditions were more favorable, and the Army officers down at the field nodded their heads.

"Let's go!" shouted Maughan, as he dashed out to his helpers in the gray light of early dawn.

Regardless of the early hour, a group of two hundred people watched the start—Army officers and their wives, newspaper reporters, mechanics, and others. The powerful little pursuit plane was wheeled out of its hangar and tuned up. The motor responded with a roar. Maughan went all around it giving a last minute personal inspection, then strapped on his folded parachute for any emergency landing, and stepped into the cockpit.

Besides a letter of greeting from the Mayor of New York to the Mayor of San Francisco, he carried a small packet of other letters, and a copy of the New York *Times* hot off the press. If letters and papers of the same date could be delivered on the opposite Coast before dusk, it would indeed mark an epoch!

"Stand clear!" ordered Major Hensley, in charge of the field.

The crowd sprang back, leaving only the men helping to hold the machine to earth. On the stroke of four A.M. Eastern Daylight Saving Time, came another curt order. Maughan waved his hands at his helpers, the skids were knocked from under the wheels, the men sprang away, and like a scared rabbit the plane bounded over the turf. Only a hundred yards or so it touched, then disdaining the earth it sprang up eagerly for its natural home, the sky.

Swinging around the field once in a great circle, to test the engine further and gain altitude, it rose gracefully, straightened out, and pointed its nose west. A

minute or two more and only the faint drone of a now invisible craft told the watchers on the field that the third flight to the Coast was under way.

Dayton, the first stop, was 570 miles away, but just seven minutes over four hours found Maughan making a perfect landing at McCook Field, its airport. The June weather was ideal. It was a clear and almost windless day. As the pilot stepped out of his machine, he shook his fist genially at the sun still at his back on the eastern horizon.

"Don't crowd me, old fellow, and excuse my dust!" he challenged.

A change in the landing gear and some other last-minute tinkering held him longer than he anticipated. He drank some more coffee and ate another bun—for flying in the early morning does give one an appetite—and then walked around impatiently until the last nut was tightened and the order came to go. It was a quarter after eight before he rose again in the air, heading for St. Joseph.

This leg of the journey was also 570 miles, but so beautifully did his plane behave that he came down without a hitch in just three hours and thirty-seven minutes! The hundreds of spectators waiting for him at Rosecrans Field, St. Joseph, nearly went crazy as the stubby little craft spiraled gracefully down.

"He's here! He's here!" they shouted.

But Maughan only laughed at this evidence of hero worship as he stepped out of the cockpit.

"Nothing to it!" he said. "It was too easy to be exciting!"

Nevertheless he gave another glance at the orb of day shining so brightly overhead, and then to the west. The race was only well started, he knew. A bite of cold chicken and a glass of milk refreshed the inner man, while his more greedy plane demanded its food. Forty minutes, however, sufficed for man and beast, and amid tumultuous cheering they were again on their way.

North Platte, Nebraska, was a new stop which for safety's sake had been added. Maughan reached there a little after one o'clock, and was halted only twenty-three minutes; then winged his way aloft once more on a flight of 215 miles to Cheyenne. He reached there at 2:17, Mountain Time, having covered 1,680 miles, or nearly two-thirds of his distance.

Thus far conditions had been almost ideal, but the hardest leg of the trip still lay ahead. Would his engine still run as smoothly as now? He recalled his terrible sickness of the year before, and seemed to smell again the dreadful odor of burning oil. A second whiff, and he smiled. It was only imagination playing tricks upon him. The sun was now shining in his face. It had been at his back heretofore. It was on its relentless way to the western horizon. Would it beat him there?

"It will *not!*" He answered his own question aloud, and pressed his lips in a tight line.

Meantime bulletins in every city, East and West, reported his progress and were watched eagerly. Some enterprising papers posted up large maps on which his route was traced. He was now on the borderline between Colorado and Wyoming, heading straight across the Rockies at a speed of 170 miles an hour. As he looked down into their narrow defiles, he must have recalled the heroic days of old, when the first scouts and settlers sought out the passes across these mighty barriers and finally won through with their crawling prairie schooners. Now he was doing in minutes what it required them days and weeks to accomplish.

Rock Springs and Granger, Wyoming, reported his flight by radio and wire. He was flying easily and like a bird, they said. At 5:38, Mountain Time, word came from Ogden, Utah, that his plane had been sighted. He had already shattered all records in this country for distance flight, so now the only question which still concerned people was, "Will he make it?" That was the question eagerly discussed at thousands of supper tables, that evening.

Salduro, on the farthest borders of Utah, was the next regular stop, and in he flew triumphantly at 5:20, Pacific Time. He had one great advantage in flying with the sun: when the time changed, it was in his favor. That explains why Ogden could report him at 5:38, and he reached Salduro beyond at 5:20!

A pause there of half an hour—then the faithful motor again responded and he was off again on the last

hop. The engine seemed actually to share his eagerness to get on—to beat that great red disk that now led the way. On some stretches the plane skimmed along at better than three miles a minute. As he listened to the even throb of the pistons, the pilot's face relaxed its tense lines. Only one disturbing thought haunted him. Around San Francisco Bay fogs were frequent. If he lost his landing port or were even delayed in reaching it, the race would be lost.

The same thought came to thousands who, in the early evening, wended their way toward Crissy Field, or watched the bulletins, or listened to radio reports. He was reported at Reno, Nevada, and Truckee, California, a little after eight, still hastening onward. But now a light mist arose around Crissy Field, where he was to land, and the officer in charge, after looking sharply around, barked out an order to a sergeant in the Air Force, Kelly:

"Go out and bring him in!"

Up went Kelly and soon disappeared in the haze toward the east, while the watchers cheered him—as much to ease the tension as anything else.

Back at New York, his starting point, it had long been dark; but thanks to his companion, the sun, Maughan had flown in the daylight and thus fulfilled the terms of the race. As he watched the orb, now looking more like a huge orange than anything else, dropping slowly but inexorably down toward the western rim, his heart sank with it. Was he to fail after

all? He could not discern clearly his way, and moments were precious.

But look! Sailing to meet him was a speck which swiftly resolved itself into another plane, and as it neared him a hand was waved in greeting. His keen eyes recognized it as another Army plane. He slackened his pace a trifle, giving his friend time to circle and come alongside. Then on they sped together.

A few moments more and they saw great beams of light moving slowly across the sky. Then came the long-drawn-out wail of sirens which made themselves heard even above the roar of the exhaust. They marked the finish line of the great race—the tape the racer was to break to be declared the winner.

Piloted by the grinning Kelly, Maughan swooped down to within a thousand feet of the ground, then circled the field twice in lowering spirals. Finally he lighted gracefully at the end of the field and taxied to the center—and as he stepped out of the cockpit, the last golden rim of the sun disappeared where California meets the sea. He had won!

"A letter for you, sir!" said the aviator a few minutes later to Mayor Rolph, as he handed over the missive, and the cameras clicked. It was indeed an historic occasion, another milestone in the long way that the mail had traveled. Not only had letters reached their recipients in a single day across the continent, but a newspaper had also been delivered on the same day in which it was printed.

HE WAS HEADED STRAIGHT ACROSS THE ROCKIES AT A SPEED OF 170 MILES AN HOUR.

In cold figures, Maughan had completed the distance of 2,670 miles from Coast to Coast, in the record time of twenty-one hours, forty-eight minutes—and this included five stops!

Like most men who have done big things, the young Army officer disclaimed any special merit for this. He refused to be lionized, saying that it was all in the day's work.

"It was not a stunt flight, fellows," he remarked earnestly to the reporters who crowded about him. "Please emphasize that fact. It was not a stunt flight, but a Service flight to see what schedule is practical for our Air and Mail Service."

Another quiet man back in Washington thought the same thing; for the next morning at his breakfast table, which was heaped high with messages of congratulation, the airman read this telegram:

"LIEUTENANT RUSSELL L. MAUGHAN,
"Crissy Field, San Francisco.
"I am glad to extend to you my cordial congratulations. Your flight is an achievement of which every American is proud, and it marks a real advance in practical aviation.
"CALVIN COOLIDGE."

It is pleasant to record that the thing Maughan and other air pioneers have striven for is now an accomplished fact. A regular Transcontinental Air Service has been set up, on the longest continuous Air Mail

route in the world. Great lighthouses, or beacons whose powerful rays sweep the heavens, have been strung all along the route, so that, although the pilot cannot, like Maughan, keep the sun constantly in sight, he can follow his path unwaveringly day or night. The regular schedule time is only a little over thirty hours from Coast to Coast. The sturdy pilots maintain this, year in and year out, summer and winter, with few accidents and little tardiness.

Think of it! A letter posted in New York in the morning of one day reaches San Francisco on the afternoon of the next. And in every other direction—north, south, east, and west, other tireless airmen are flying, reaching every part of the United States and out across the Caribbean Sea to Central and South America, West Indies and Mexico.

Chapter XVI

LINDBERGH BLAZES A NEW TRAIL

From Los Angeles to New York in 14¾ hours at 14,000 feet altitude.—A test flight at "higher ceilings" for greater speed on Air Mail routes.

(Time: To-day)

ONE of the most promising youngsters whom this new Air Mail Service developed was a lanky chap named Lindbergh, called by his fellow-pilots "Lindy" for short. He first won his spurs on a regular air route in the West and was known for his daring and the long chances he took. But by far the longest chance he ever took was in 1927.

When Lindbergh, on May 20th of that year, started from Roosevelt Field, Long Island, on that now famous hop alone across the Atlantic, he was still an unknown mail pilot. The world began to take notice when his plane was sighted by one or two steamers along the ocean ship lane; it held its breath when he swooped down out of the sky on some fishermen in the ocean and asked if this were Ireland; it whooped for joy as the *Spirit of St. Louis* appeared out of the night over

Le Bourget Airdrome in Paris, hovered over the tremendous crowd gathered there, and then landed carefully in a cleared space, among the floodlights.

Stepping out of the cockpit of his machine, the young man modestly informed the crowd, who were ready to tear him to pieces in their enthusiasm, that his name was Charles A. Lindbergh, and presented a letter of introduction he carried to Ambassador Herrick! This letter was the first to be delivered across the Atlantic by Air Mail.

Thus this young man, so daring yet modest, ambitious to accomplish yet unwilling to exploit for mere personal gain or advantage these fine qualities, sprang over night from obscurity into fame and the affections of the whole world. It was but natural, moreover, that the man who had been so courageous as to attempt alone a hazardous and extremely doubtful air passage across the stormy Atlantic would lose no time now by striving for greater accomplishments and new records. He was not interested in self-advancement.

Those who know him best know that whatever he is undertaking, his purpose is to make some gain for the science of aviation, to discover some new knowledge that will benefit mankind, to make mail and passenger transportation service faster and safer. This genius of the air, who has flown over three hundred and fifty thousand miles since he first began to fly, does not navigate on luck as we know it. "Lindy's Luck" is a careful and painstaking regard for details; it is a thorough

knowledge of his machine and an extraordinary flying skill; an unerring, uncanny judgment of direction, a fearlessness without foolhardiness which neither wind nor rain nor snow nor gloom of night can daunt in the slightest degree. What may seem hazardous to others is often entirely practical to him.

So it was that on Easter Sunday, April 20, 1930, he proceeded to put into practice a theory he long had held, that if passage through the air was made at a high altitude from ten to twenty thousand feet above the earth, the very thinness of the air would offer so much less resistance to the passage of an airplane, that it would be possible to make greater speed and also avoid any storms or unfavorable weather that might be engaging the areas closer to the earth.

In May, 1923, Lieutenants Kelly and MacCready had made the first non-stop flight across the continent in a Fokker monoplane with a Liberty engine, from Roosevelt Field to San Diego, California, in 26 hours and 50 minutes. Lieutenant Russell L. Maughan reduced that time to 21 hours, 48 minutes and 30 seconds (June 23, 1924), on the first dawn-to-dusk flight from New York to San Francisco, making, however, five refueling stops en route. Arthur Goebel and Harry Tucker, in a Lockheed Yankee Doodle with a Wasp motor, flew from Los Angeles to Long Island in 18 hours and 58 minutes, in August of 1928. Captain Frank M. Hawks brought the record down still further (February 5, 1929) to 18 hours, 21 minutes and 59

seconds, and the following June made his famous record-breaking, non-stop flight in 17 hours, 38 minutes and 5 seconds.

Lindbergh's new proposed transcontinental flight aimed not to break any of these records, but only to prove his theory of high altitude flying—for high altitudes mean high speeds—yet he knew, if his theory was correct, he *would* break all records and so blaze a new trail, a faster and safer route for mail and express service.

It was still dark on Easter morning when Colonel Lindbergh and his wife drove out with friends to the Grand Central Airport at Glendale, California, a few miles from Los Angeles. The air was chilly and the few spectators who had come to see them off shivered in the cool wind and turned up their coat collars.

At the head of the runway stood the bullet-shaped Lockheed Sirius monoplane, its motor running, being warmed up by the mechanics; for Lindbergh himself had previously gone over the plane, examining the fuselage, the struts and every other detail, to make sure that all was in perfect order.

Now he sat with his wife and friends in the darkness of a car parked close by the throbbing plane, while his assistants, moving about in the gloom, prepared it for its flight. A sealed barograph that was to hold the record of the flight was placed in the rear of the plane, the parachutes were stored away, one in each tandem cockpit, together with two baskets of lunch, while a

chart showing the course over the continent was fastened down in the rear cockpit and an aviation sextant placed there, by which to navigate the plane. Some four hundred gallons of gasoline had previously been stored away and a good supply of oil, which would be sufficient for the first leg of the journey.

At last all was ready, the plane thoroughly warmed and pulsing with the rhythm of its motor, like a nervous bird poised to dart away at the first alarm.

Lindbergh swung out of the parked car and, closely followed by his wife, made his way to the throbbing plane. Jauntily? Hardly. For the heavy, electrically heated flying suits which he and Mrs. Lindbergh were wearing, hardly made for grace. And yet those heated suits would be of good service to them in the heights to which they would ascend; for three miles up in the air it would be bitter cold.

The spectators and friends gave them a last handshake or good luck wish. Lindbergh pulled himself up, swung one long leg over the front cockpit and heaved himself aboard with ease, while his wife, handicapped by the weight of her clumsy gear, was helped up into the rear cockpit. There, sextant in hand, ready to take on her duties of navigator, she continued to talk with friends standing near her, while her husband was looking over the dials and inspecting for the last time the instruments mounted on the board before him.

A word, and the spectators fell away from the airship and gave it a wide berth. The first streaks of light

were glimmering faintly in the east. Only here and there a mechanic remained close by for a last order. The propeller was turning faster and faster, to the deafening roar of the Wasp motor; the blocks were removed from the landing wheels, and the mechanics stepped away. A movement of the stick, and the plane began to move forward heavily. There were some anxious moments as the ship staggered haltingly down the runway for almost the length of the field, tilting a little on its side. Would he make it?

Hardly visible in the mist of the morning, the Lockheed Sirius slowly began to rise, its nose pointing upward for a climb. Louder came the roar of the motor, and higher—slowly—but higher, the ship arose, till it was certain she had cleared the tops of the trees and the wires that bordered the flying field. They were off at last, at 5:26:20 by Pacific Time (8:26:20 Eastern Standard Time), headed for the daybreak over the mountains; while the visitors, with the drone of the motor lessening in the distance, began to disperse to their homes.

Meanwhile, the staunch Lockheed monoplane sped on. Higher and higher it mounted as it headed for the San Gabriel Mountains. At the height of ten thousand feet or more to which it had then risen, it met the rising sun, whose first rays touched only the bare crest of Mount Whitney, miles away, and the loftiest tops of the dark mountains—over the San Bernardino Valley, still lying in the mystic haze of early morning.

The country below, except the greater configurations, was scarcely more discernible than a large flat clay geographical map laid out before them. And so great was the height of the plane, it was not possible to see it from the ground.

Somewhat more than an hour after they had left Glendale, they were crossing the Colorado River and skirting past The Needles, those rocky pinnacles along its banks, which from that height were mere pinpoints. The Colorado River stretched like a narrow ribbon below them, flashing now and then as the sun began to climb over the mountains, and sinking into the depths of the Grand Canyon, a mere scratch in the landscape. On toward the north they flew, across the top of Arizona and New Mexico. The Great Desert was only one mass of continuous flatness, shining white with alkali, livened occasionally by the red hills in New Mexico. They passed over the first of the Rockies near Santa Fé, and south of Colorado into Kansas.

If their friends were waiting for reports of the Lindberghs' flight, the long hours of silence must have caused them great anxiety. For indeed, they were so high up over the earth, that of the thousands of anxious and interested watchers along the route, none could discern the dot that was the Lockheed, 'way up in the sunlit sky; nor could the tremendous roar of the Wasp motor reach down from the three-mile height. For the sturdy plane was now averaging fourteen to fifteen thousand feet altitude above the ground.

Suddenly out of the western sky at Wichita, Kansas, to a perfect landing at the airport, swooped the plane, at 3:20:30 P.M. (Eastern Standard Time)—making 1,249 miles from its starting point in 6 hours, 56 minutes and 10 seconds. The Easter Sunday crowds that had been waiting for them since early afternoon could hardly be kept back by the police.

The stop was to be but short—merely for refueling—time was too valuable. The pilot swung out of his cockpit to direct the taking on of some 245 gallons of gasoline and 14 gallons of oil to replenish his spent supply. Mrs. Lindbergh remained in the rear cockpit.

In twenty minutes—at 3:42:35 P.M. (Eastern Standard Time)—they again took the air, flying on the second and final leg of the journey to New York.

Just before they had got under way, Lindbergh had been warned of a bad storm area ahead, directly in the path which they were following.

"The storm area won't interfere with us," said Lindbergh. "We'll be far above any storms."

The reports of their arrival and departure had been flashed all over the country, and those directly in his path east kept a sharp lookout. But as mysteriously as they had come, the Lindberghs had again vanished, flying over Missouri, across the Mississippi River and the flat country of the Middle Western States, without any one seeing them. Only at Allentown, Pa., did they hear the sound of the Wasp motor, for by that time the Lindberghs were nearing their destination

and coming down to lower altitudes. All the way up to that point they had gone by dead reckoning.

The weather of Sunday evening was perfect and the sky cloudless. The stars were sharp and bright, and the visibility around Roosevelt Field, Long Island, was excellent. A chill land breeze was blowing, even as in the take-off in California that morning, which made the Lindbergh watchers hug their coats tighter; but their eyes were turned toward the sky in the direction from which he was expected to arrive.

The great white runway from which Lindbergh had taken off, three years before, on the epoch-making trans-ocean air trip to Paris, was brilliant with flood-lights, and a great "ceiling light"—a powerful search-light that shot its single ray up in the sky and could be seen fifty miles away—kept steadily pointing toward the stars. A hundred arc lights circled the boundaries of the field and a red beacon, rotating, blinked at regular intervals.

Suddenly the faint drone of a motor was heard in the distance. It expanded steadily—louder and louder—till it came as a tremendous roar.

"Lindy! Lindy!" shouted the crowd, rushing as far on the field as the police would permit them.

And then from out the darkness in the west, down upon the light-drenched field, swooped the bullet-shaped, low-winged plane—for all the world like a giant June beetle—and came to a neat landing on the cleared runway.

From the take-off at the Grand Central Airport outside of Los Angeles at 5:26:20 A.M. (8:26:20 A.M., Eastern Standard Time) to the landing at Roosevelt Field in the suburbs of New York at 11:11:52 P.M., Lindbergh had covered a distance of approximately 2,700 miles, at a speed of over 180 miles an hour, in 14 hours, 45 minutes and 32 seconds, and at an average altitude of 14,000 feet. Another epoch-making flight by the world's greatest flyer had been concluded, a new world's record had been established and a new theory in flying—high altitude for speed—had been proven to be no longer a theory but a fact.

Thus did Colonel Lindbergh blaze a new trail for the Air Mail—a trail above the clouds—and prepare for the day when a letter will cross the continent in less than fifteen hours' actual flying time. And some day his record will be bettered. So, too, a man will be able to post a letter in New York and receive a reply the same business day from Boston and cities of like distance.

What a long way the world has come, in annihilating time and space, since the post-runners of the days of King Sargon!

Were this a story of Air Mail delivery in general, page after page could be filled with the exploits of our flyers. Link after link in the chain is being steadily forged, until soon no city in the world will be so remote that it cannot be reached by these messengers

from the sky. In far-off Alaska the mail man, mushing along with his dog team and sledge—all honor to him!—now glances up as he hears a low droning sound in the sky. A swift rush, a friendly wave of the hand from aloft, and the plane has passed him at the rate of a hundred miles an hour, to his eight or ten. It, also, is carrying the mail, but so much more speedily and safely that soon he and his dogs will have to seek other employment.

So, on the deck of a palatial steamer bound for the West Indies or South America, a passenger, lolling on his steamer chair in the tropical breeze, will hear the soft drone of an airplane motor and look with interest for a new object to break the monotony of the placid sea trip. The spot on the northern horizon takes the shape of a tiny dragon fly skimming smartly through white clouds, draws nearer and nearer, its motor louder and louder, rapping out a steady staccato. With a roar it overhauls the fast steamer—a great amphibian airplane carrying mail to Central and South America. A few moments more and it is gone again, headed southwest across the Caribbean.

On the second day after leaving New York this mail will be in the Canal Zone, with stops at Havana, Cuba, and perhaps Cabezas, Nicaragua; on the fourth day the mail will arrive at Lima, Peru; on the fifth day it will be in Arica and on the sixth at Santiago, Chile; on the seventh day it arrives at Buenos Aires, Argentina. It would take the swiftest steamer six days from

New York to Panama; ten to twelve days from New York to Peru, and seventeen days to Chile and the Argentine. How well the airmen have done their task! By day and by night, over the tempestuous ocean and the bitter cold heights of the loftiest Andes, through torrid equatorial heat and blinding snowstorms, no flyer has drawn back, none stayed behind unwilling to complete his appointed round.

As we see the Air Mail boxes at the street corners, with their familiar red, white and blue bands, or read the signs on the mail wagons: "Air Mail, five cents for the first ounce," let us remember with a thrill of pride that some quiet, resolute fellow like Maughan or Lindy will pilot his craft hour after hour, through cloud, fog, rain, snow, wind, darkness—every variety of weather, good or bad—to take that letter to its destination.

They are our heroes of the everyday—the logical descendants of the post-riders of the centuries—and what Herodotus said 2,500 years ago, about those who carried the mail for the great King of Persia, is as true to-day with our more complex civilization and more exacting conditions:

NEITHER SNOW NOR RAIN NOR HEAT NOR GLOOM OF NIGHT STAYS THESE COURIERS FROM THE SWIFT COMPLETION OF THEIR APPOINTED ROUNDS.

Appendix

THE AIR MAIL SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES

VERY few of us realize what a vast airway network covers the United States, and extends also into Canada, Mexico, Central and South America. Somewhere in this country each minute of every day, an aeroplane is roaring through the skies at one hundred miles or more an hour, carrying mail, thus making it possible to communicate with some far distant point and receive an answer back, in much less time than it took heretofore only to send a letter to its destination by the fastest express train.

There are approximately thirty air routes in operation to-day, with new routes being added continuously. One hundred and eighty-two (182) towns and cities in the United States are reached by these routes and, according to the Æronautical Chamber of Commerce, the mail carriers flew 14,889,850 miles during the year. The Air Mail income last year amounted to more than $13,000,000.

It is not possible to list here all of the routes and schedules of the Air Mail Service in the United States, nor is it desirable to do so; but in order to picture graphically how completely the Air Mail has annihilated distance and brought the furthermost points in this country, as well as our neighboring countries, into close contact, only the most important Air Mail routes within the United States, and from the United States to Central America and South America, are given.

However, these schedules are changing continually as the Government finds ways and means of improving the Air Mail Service; but they will enable the reader of this book to grasp the magnitude of this service, its speed and completeness, and its tremendous growth within the past few years.

How They Carried the Mail—what a change from the post runners of King Sargon, the couriers of the Middle Ages, and the Pony Express of not so many years ago! The Air Mail makes even the fastest express trains and the speediest steamships look slow and out-of-date as a means of communication to-day.—Thirty hours across the continent instead of four days; seven days from New York to Buenos Aires instead of seventeen!

U. S. Air Mail Service Within the United States

No attempt is made to give here a complete list of the Air Mail routes. Nor are the comparatively short routes between important cities, such as New York to Boston, Chicago to St. Louis, etc., included.

The schedules here are limited to (1) the Transcontinental service—New York to San Francisco and Los Angeles, with the north and south connecting Air Mail routes; (2) the Eastern Seaboard service—New York to Miami and New Orleans; and (3) the Western Seaboard service—Seattle to Los Angeles.

The postage rates for Air Mail within the United States is 5 cents for the first ounce and 10 cents for each additional or fraction of an ounce. Any mailable matter except that liable to damage from freezing will be carried by the Air Mail, provided the parcel does not exceed fifty (50) pounds in weight and eighty-four (84) inches in length and girth combined.

APPENDIX

TRANSCONTINENTAL

AND CONNECTING AIR MAIL ROUTES

Read down — *Read up*

Westbound		*C. A. M. Route 17* *New York-Chicago*	Eastbound	
Daily	Daily		Daily	Daily
		(Eastern Time)		
6.30 pm	10.00 am	close New York, N. Y. (GPO) ar.	7.30 pm	6.35 am
9.35 pm	12.15 pm	lv. . . . . Air Mail Field . . . . . ar.	4.45 pm	4.45 am
2.15 am	4.20 pm	ar. . . . . Cleveland, Ohio . . . . . lv.	12.15 pm	12.15 am
2.30 am	4.35 pm	lv. . . . . Cleveland, Ohio . . . . . ar.	12.00 m	12.00 pm
3.20 am	5.20 pm	lv. . . . . Toledo, Ohio . . . . . lv.	10.50 am	10.50 pm
		(Central Time)		
5.35 am	7.00 pm	ar. . . . . Chicago, Ill. (Field) . . . lv.	8.00 am	8.00 pm

Daily Except Monday	Daily	*C. A. M. Route 18* *Chicago-San Francisco-Los Angeles*	Daily Except Monday	Daily
		(Central Time)		
8.00 am	8.00 pm	lv. . . . . Chicago, Ill. (Field) . . . ar.	6.00 am	6.00 pm
10.15 am	10.15 pm	lv. . . . . Iowa City, Iowa		
11.30 am	. . . . .	Cedar Rapids, Iowa . . . . lv.	3.00 am	2.00 pm
12.40 pm	. . . . .	Des Moines, Iowa . . . . . lv.	2.00 am	1.00 pm
1.00 pm	12.30 am	ar. . . . . Omaha, Nebr. . . . . lv.	1.00 am	12.40 pm
1.30 pm	1.00 am	lv. . . . . Omaha, Nebr. . . . . ar.	12.30 am	12.05 pm
3.30 pm	3.15 am	ar. . . . . North Platte, Nebr. . . . . lv.	10.00 pm	
		(Mountain Time)		
2.45 pm	2.30 am	lv. . . . . North Platte, Nebr. . . . ar.	9.45 pm	
4.45 pm	4.30 am	ar. . . . . Cheyenne, Wyo. . . . . lv.	7.45 pm	7.45 am
5.00 pm	4.45 am	lv. . . . . Cheyenne, Wyo. . . . . ar.	7.30 pm	7.30 am
7.30 pm	7.15 am	lv. . . . . Rock Springs, Wyo. . . .		
9.30 pm	9.30 am	ar. . . . . Salt Lake City, Utah . . . lv.	4.00 pm	4.00 am
		(Pacific Time)		
9.00 pm	9.00 am	lv. . . . . Salt Lake City, Utah . . . ar.	2.30 pm	2.30 am
11.00 pm	11.00 am	lv. . . . . Elko, Nev. . . . . lv.	12.30 pm	12.30 am
1.15 am	1.15 pm	ar. . . . . Reno, Nev. . . . . lv.	10.15 am	10.15 pm
1.30 am	1.30 pm	lv. . . . . Reno, Nev. . . . . ar.	10.00 am	10.00 pm
2.30 am	2.30 pm	lv. . . . . Sacramento, Calif. . . . lv.	8.50 am	8.50 pm
4.30 am	4.30 pm	ar. . . { Oakland, Calif. . . . . } { San Francisco, Calif. . } lv.	8.00 am	8.00 pm
9.30 pm	9.10 am	lv. . . . Salt Lake City, Utah . . . ar.	1.45 pm	1.45 am
2.45 am	2.25 pm	lv. . . . Las Vegas, Nev. . . . . lv.	10.40 am	10.05 pm
4.15 am	5.25 pm	ar. . . . Los Angeles, Calif. . . . . lv.	7.35 am	7.00 pm

Read down — *Read up*

Westbound Daily	C. A. M. *Route 9—Chicago-Minneapolis* (Central Time)		Eastbound Daily
11.30 pm	lv.	Chicago, Ill. ar.	3.45 am
12.20 am	lv.	Milwaukee, Wis. lv.	3.05 am
3.30 am	lv.	St. Paul, Minn. lv.	11.45 pm
3.45 am	ar.	Minneapolis, Minn. lv.	11.30 pm

Southbound Daily	C. A. M. *Route 3 (Night)—Chicago-Dallas* (Central Time)		Northbound Daily
8.00 pm	lv.	Chicago, Ill. ar.	5.40 am
9.50 pm	lv.	Moline, Ill. lv.	4.20 am
1.10 am	lv.	Kansas City, Mo. lv.	1.10 am
3.15 am	lv.	Wichita, Kans. lv.	11.10 pm
4.10 am	lv.	Ponca City, Okla. lv.	10.20 pm
5.20 am	ar.	Tulsa, Okla. lv.	9.20 pm
5.25 am	lv.	Oklahoma City, Okla. lv.	9.20 pm
7.35 am	lv.	Fort Worth, Tex. lv.	8.00 pm
8.00 am	ar.	Dallas, Tex. lv.	7.30 pm

Connects Route 21 and 22 at Fort Worth.

	C. A. M. *Route 21—Dallas-Galveston* (Central Time)		
7.45 am	lv.	Dallas, Tex. ar.	7.37 pm
8.15 am	lv.	Fort Worth, Tex. lv.	7.15 pm
9.20 am	lv.	Waco, Tex. lv.	6.15 pm
10.50 am	lv.	Houston, Tex. lv.	4.45 pm
11.30 am	ar.	Galveston, Tex. lv.	4.00 pm

	C. A. M. *Route 22—Dallas-Brownsville* (Central Time)		
7.45 am	lv.	Dallas, Tex. ar.	7.35 pm
8.15 am	lv.	Fort Worth, Tex. lv.	7.15 pm
9.20 am	lv.	Waco, Tex. lv.	6.15 pm
10.25 am	lv.	Austin, Tex. lv.	5.10 pm
11.20 am	lv.	San Antonio, Tex. lv.	4.15 pm
2.05 pm	ar.	Brownsville, Tex. lv.	1.25 pm

APPENDIX

EAST COAST

NEW YORK TO ATLANTA-MIAMI-NEW ORLEANS

Read down — *Read up*

Southbound		*C. A. M. Route 19* *New York-Atlanta* (Eastern Time)		Northbound	
Daily	Daily			Daily	Daily
1.00 pm	6.30 pm	close	New York, N. Y. (GPO)	ar.	6.05 am	11.05 am
3.00 pm	9.10 pm	lv.	New York, N. Y. (Landing field)	ar.	5.00 am	9.30 am
3.55 pm	10.05 pm	lv.	Philadelphia, Pa. / Camden, N. J.	lv.	4.10 am	8.40 am
5.15 pm	11.25 pm	lv.	Washington, D. C.	lv.	2.50 am	7.20 am
6.25 pm	12.35 am	lv.	Richmond, Va.	lv.	1.45 am	6.15 am
8.25 pm	2.35 am	lv.	Greensboro, N. C.	lv.	11.35 pm	4.10 am
9.20 pm		lv.	Charlotte, N. C.	lv.	10.40 pm	
10.10 pm	4.10 am	lv.	Spartanburg, S. C.	lv.	9.50 pm	2.35 am
11.55 pm	5.55 am	ar.	Atlanta, Ga.	lv.	8.00 pm	12.45 am

South-bound Daily	*C. A. M. Route 25—Atlanta-Miami* (Eastern Time)			North-bound Daily
6.45 am	lv.	Atlanta, Ga.	ar.	12.15 am
7.40 am	lv.	Macon, Ga.	lv.	11.25 pm
10.00 am	lv.	Jacksonville, Fla.	lv.	9.15 pm
11.00 am	ar.	Daytona Beach, Fla.	lv.	8.05 pm
11.05 am	lv.	Daytona Beach, Fla.	ar.	7.05 pm
11.45 am	lv.	Orlando, Fla.	lv.	6.35 pm
12.50 pm	lv.	Tampa, Fla.	lv.	5.30 pm
1.15 pm	ar.	St. Petersburg, Fla.	lv.	5.15 pm
11.05 am	lv.	Daytona Beach, Fla.	ar.	8.00 pm
1.45 pm	ar.	Miami, Fla.	lv.	5.30 pm

	C. A. M. Route 23—Atlanta-New Orleans (Central Time)			
5.30 am	lv.	Atlanta, Ga.	ar.	6.30 pm
7.10 am	lv.	Birmingham, Ala.	lv.	4.55 pm
9.30 am	lv.	Mobile, Ala.	lv.	2.35 pm
11.00 am	ar.	New Orleans, La.	lv.	1.00 pm

WEST COAST

Read down — *Read up*

South-bound Daily	C. A. M. *Route 8—Seattle-Los Angeles* (Pacific Time)	North-bound Daily
*11.45 pm	lv. Seattle, Wash. ar.	1.00 pm
* 1.30 am	lv. Tacoma, Wash. lv.	12.25 pm
7.25 am	lv. Vancouver, Wash. / Portland, Ore. lv.	10.30 am
9.30 am	lv. Medford, Ore. lv.	8.00 am
12.45 pm	ar. San Francisco, Calif. / Crissy Field	
12.50 pm	lv. Crissy Field	
1.00 pm	ar. Oakland, Calif. lv.	4.00 am
1.15 pm	lv. Oakland, Calif. ar.	3.45 am
2.45 pm	lv. Fresno, Calif. lv.	2.00 am
3.50 pm	lv. Bakersfield, Calif. lv.	12.55 am
5.00 pm	ar. Los Angeles, Calif. lv.	11.45 pm
5.00 am	lv. Oakland, Calif. ar.	7.25 pm
5.25 am	ar. San Jose, Calif. lv.	7.00 pm

* Dispatch is by train to Portland Field.

U. S. Air Mail Service to Central and South America, West Indies and Mexico

The United States maintains Air Mail routes to Mexico and all countries of Central and South America and the West Indies, except Jamaica and Brazil. In the schedule given below the most important countries only have been selected, or the countries whose location illustrates most graphically the vast net-work of Air Mail Service that fans out from the United States southward across the Caribbean.

For the purpose of listing the schedule of Air Mail to these countries of Central and South America, West Indies and Mexico, New York City has been taken as the starting point. The mail is dispatched from New York *via* aeroplane

to Miami, Florida, where it connects with the foreign Air Mail routes. (For certain parts of Mexico it is routed *via* Brownsville, Texas.)

In the following schedule are shown, in parallel columns, the country to which the Air Mail is addressed; the time of closing of the mail in New York City; the rates of postage for one-half ounce; the date at which the Air Mail arrives at destination; and the course of the foreign mail route or routes from Miami to destination. In the last column, as an interesting comparison, there is listed the time it would take the mail by the ordinary route, *i.e.*, steamer from New York to destination. In the case of Mexico, this time is figured overland by train to Mexico City.

Country	*Eastern Standard Time* — *Closing Time G.P.O. New York*	*Rates of Postage per ½ oz.*	*Due via Airplane at*	*Foreign Air Mail Route*	*Steamer from New York* — Transit Time in Days
Argentina	6.30 pm Fri.	55 cents	Mendoza am 7th day Buenos Aires pm 7th day	Miami-Cristobal Cristobal-Montevideo	17
Bahama Islands.	6.30 pm daily Jan. 1 to April 30	5 cents	Nassau am 2d day	Miami-Nassau	3 3
Bolivia	6.30 pm Fri.	40 cents	Mollendo, Peru pm 5th day	Miami-Cristobal Cristobal-Montevideo	14 to 18
British Guiana.	6.30 pm Mon.	30 cents	Georgetown B. G. am 5th day	Miami-San Juan San Juan-Paramaribo	12
British Honduras	6.30 pm Sun. & Wed.	15 cents	Belize, B. H. pm 2d day	Miami-Cristobal	6
British Virgin Islands	6.30 pm Mon.	10 cents	St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. am 4th day	Miami-San Juan San Juan-Paramaribo	6 to 7
Canal Zone ...	6.30 pm Sun. & Wed. 6.30 pm Fri.	20 cents	Cristobal, C. Z. pm 4th day Cristobal, C. Z. pm 2d day	Miami-Cristobal	6 to 8

APPENDIX

Country	Eastern Standard Time Closing Time G.P.O. New York	Rates of Postage per ½ oz.	Due via Airplane at	Foreign Air Mail Route	Steamer from New York Transit Time in Days
Chile	6.30 pm Fri.	50 cents	Arica, Chile pm 5th day Santiago, Chile pm 6th day	Miami-Cristobal Cristobal-Montevideo	16 to 21
Colombia	6.30 pm Fri.	30 cents	Buenaventura, Col. am 3d day Cartagena, Col. pm 3d day	Miami-Cristobal Cristobal-Montevideo Miami-Puerto Cabello	7 to 10 7 to 10
Costa Rica ...	6.30 pm Sun. & Wed.	20 cents	San Jose, Costa Rica am 4th day	Miami-Cristobal	8 to 12
Cuba	6.30 pm daily ex. Fri. 6.30 pm Fri.	5 cents	Habana, Cuba am 2d day Habana, Cuba pm next day	Miami-Habana	3
Curaçao	6.30 pm Fri.	30 cents	Curaçao, D. W. I. am 4th day	Miami-Puerto Cabello	7 to 9
Dominican Rep.	6.30 pm Mon., Wed. & Sat.	10 cents	Santo Domingo, Dom. Rep. pm 3d day	Miami-San Juan	5 to 7
Dutch Guiana.	6.30 pm Mon.	30 cents	Paramaribo, D. G. pm 5th day	Miami-San Juan San Juan-Paramaribo	13 to 15
Ecuador	6.30 pm Fri.	30 cents	St. Elena, Ecuador pm 3d day Guayaquil, Ecuador am 4th day	Miami-Cristobal Cristobal-Montevideo	11
French Guiana.	6.30 pm Mon.	30 cents	Paramaribo, D. G. pm 5th day	Miami-San Juan San Juan-Paramaribo	14 to 16
Guadeloupe ...	6.30 pm Mon.	20 cents	St. Johns, Antigua am 4th day	Miami-San Juan San Juan-Paramaribo	8 to 10
Guatemala	6.30 pm Sun. & Wed.	15 cents	Guatemala City, Guat., pm 3d day	Miami-Cristobal San Lorenzo-Brownsville	7
Haiti	6.30 pm Mon., Wed. & Sat.	10 cents	Port-au-Prince, Haiti, am 3d day	Miami-San Juan	5 to 6
Honduras (Rep.)	6.30 pm Sun. & Wed.	15 cents	Tela, Hond. (Rep.) am 3d day San Lorenzo, Hond. (Rep.) pm 3d day	Miami-Cristobal	5 7 to 8
Martinique ...	6.30 pm Mon.	20 cents	St. Johns, Antigua am 4th day	Miami-San Juan San Juan-Paramaribo	10 to 12

Country	*Eastern Standard Time* — *Closing Time G.P.O. New York*	*Rates of Postage per ½ oz.*	*Due via Airplane at*	*Foreign Air Mail Route*	*Steamer from New York* — Transit Time in Days
Nicaragua	6.30 pm Sun. & Wed.	15 cents	Managua, Nic. pm 3d day	Miami-Cristobal	8 11 to 12
Panama	6.30 pm Sun. & Wed. 6.30 pm Fri.	20 cents	Panama City, Panama pm 4th day Cristobal, C. Z. pm 2d day	Miami-Cristobal	6 to 8
Paraguay	6.30 pm Fri.	55 cents	Buenos Aires, Arg. pm 7th day	Miami-Cristobal Cristobal-Montevideo	18
Peru	6.30 pm Fri.	40 cents	Lima, pm 4th day Mollendo, pm 5th day	Miami-Cristobal Cristobal-Montevideo	9 to 15
Porto Rico ...	6.30 pm Mon., Wed. & Sat.	10 cents	San Juan, P. R. pm 3d day	Miami-San Juan	4 to 5
St. Lucia	6.30 pm Mon.	20 cents	Castries, St. Lucia pm 4th day	Miami-San Juan San Juan-Paramaribo	10
St. Vincent ...	6.30 pm Mon.	20 cents	Port of Spain, Trin. pm 4th day	Miami-San Juan San Juan-Paramaribo	7 to 12
Salvador (El) ..	6.30 pm Sun. & Wed.	15 cents	San Salvador El Sal pm 3d day	Miami-Cristobal San Lorenzo-Brownsville	8
Trinidad	6.30 pm Mon.	20 cents	Port of Spain, Trin. pm 4th day	Miami-San Juan San Juan-Paramaribo	8 to 12
Uruguay	6.30 pm Fri.	55 cents	Montevideo, Uruguay pm 7th day	Miami-Cristobal Cristobal-Montevideo	16
Venezuela	6.30 pm Fri.	30 cents	Maracaibo, Venezuela pm 3d day Puerto Cabello, Venezula, noon 4th day	Miami-Puerto Cabello	8 to 10
Mexico	6.30 pm daily (via Brownsville, Tex.) 6.30 pm Tues., Thurs. & Sat. (via Brownsville, Tex.) 6.30 pm Sun. & Wed. (via Miami, Fla.)	5 cents 1st oz. or fraction & 10 cts. for each additional oz. or fraction	Tampico, Mex. am 2d day Mexico City, Mex. pm 2d day Vera Cruz pm 2d day Tapachula pm 3d day Cozumel, Mex. pm 2d day	Brownsville-Mexico City Brownsville-San Lorenzo, Honduras Miami-Cristobal	*Overland, by Train, to Mexico City* — Transit Time in Days 5

Eau Claire State Teachers College

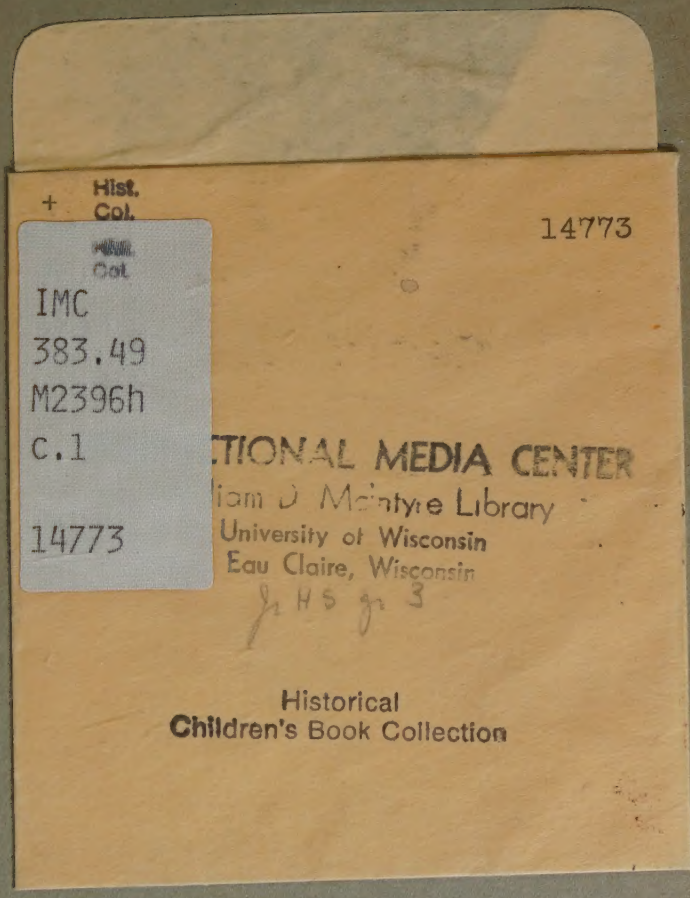
LIBRARY RULES

No book should be taken from the library until it has been properly charged by the librarian.

Books may be kept one week but are not to be renewed without special permission of the librarian.

A fine of two cents a day will be charged for books kept over time.

In case of loss or injury the person borrowing this book will be held responsible for a part or the whole of the value of a new book.

DUE	DUE	DUE	DUE
De 14 '37			
Ja 3 '38			
[illegible] 10 '39			
[illegible] 12 '44			
Ap 19 '48			
Ja 16 '50			
Dec 10'52			
MAR 22 '66			
JAN 13 '70			
NOV 5 '79			

HIGH SCHOOL
GRADES 9-12